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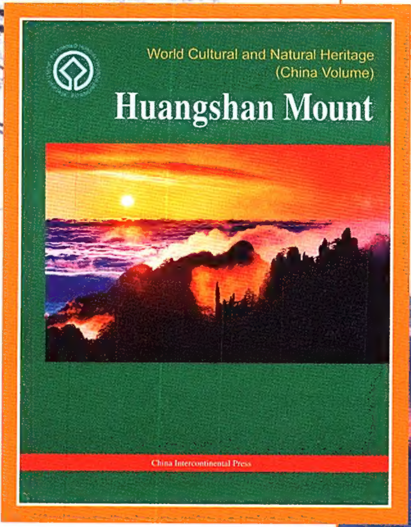
Mt. Huangshan, situated in the south of Anhui Province, is one of the most famous scenic areas in China. Being put into the World Heritage List, it is also granted with two laurels of cultural heritage and natural heritage by the UNESCO's World Heritage Commission.

The landscape of the mountain is a typical granite hoodoo landform shaped during the long geological periods by several tectonic movements in the crust. Mt. Huangshan has long been famous for its strange-looking pine trees, grotesque rocks, sea of clouds and hot springs.

All over one thousand metres above sea level, there are 77 peaks in the scenic area of almost two hundred square kilometres. Granite rock forests and rock columns together with massive rocks scatter everywhere. Moreover, Mt. Huangshan is a diverse ecosystem with a treasure of wildlife. There are approximately 1450 species of plants, 300 species of vertebrates and 170 species of birds.

Combined unique scenery and magnificent sea of clouds, the beauty of Mt. Huangshan has continued to fascinate endless visitors. Catch a glimpse of its glory in this "Huangshan Mount" pictorial that is filled with breath-taking images taken by our team of photographers!



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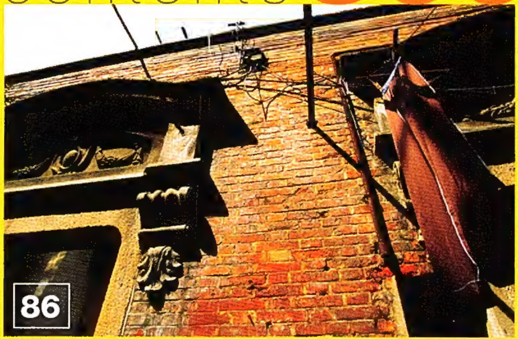

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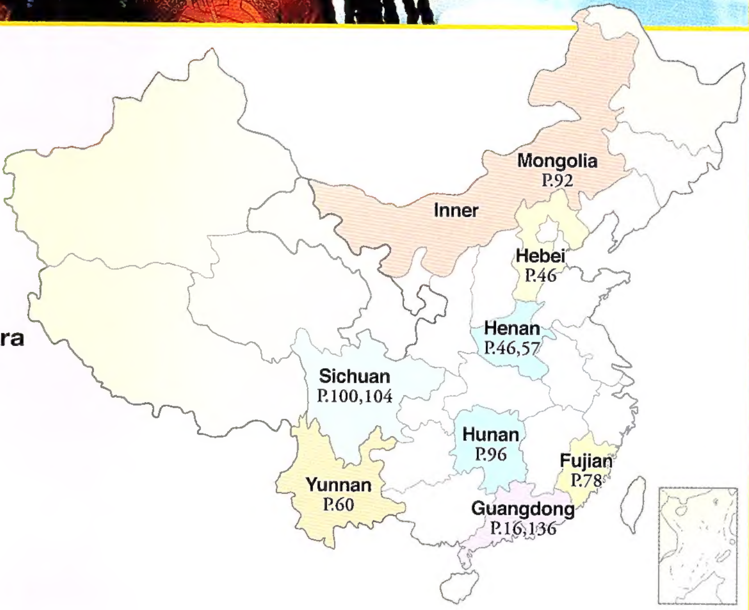
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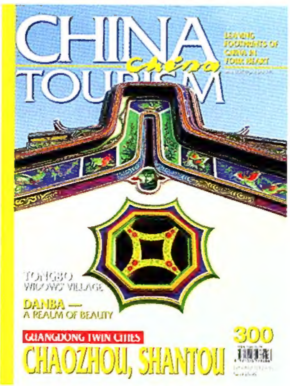
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Publisher: HK CHINA TOURISM PRESS
24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2561 8001 Fax: (852) 2561 8057/ 2561 8196
Editorial Dept., Business Dept., Advertising Dept., Sales Dept. Tel: (852) 2561 8001
China Tourism Photo Library Tel: (852) 2561 8001
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Hong Kong China Tourism Ltd. (Licence No. 351850) Tel: (852) 2516 9228
Printer: Rainbow Tower Offset Printing Ltd.
8, 9/F., Sum Lung Ind. Bldg., 11 Sun Yip St., Chaiwan, Hong Kong

Distribution: Australia • Belgium • Brazil • China • England • France • Holland • Hong Kong • Japan • Macao • Malaysia • Singapore • South Korea • Thailand

China Tourism is published six times a year by Hong Kong China Tourism Press

China Tourism bimonthly magazine is available on the scheduled flights, and at VIP lounges, guest rooms and counters of the following organisations:

CATHAY PACIFIC 港龍航空 AIR MACAU 澳門航空
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News-stand price: HK $48/ US $6.95/ CAN $8.95
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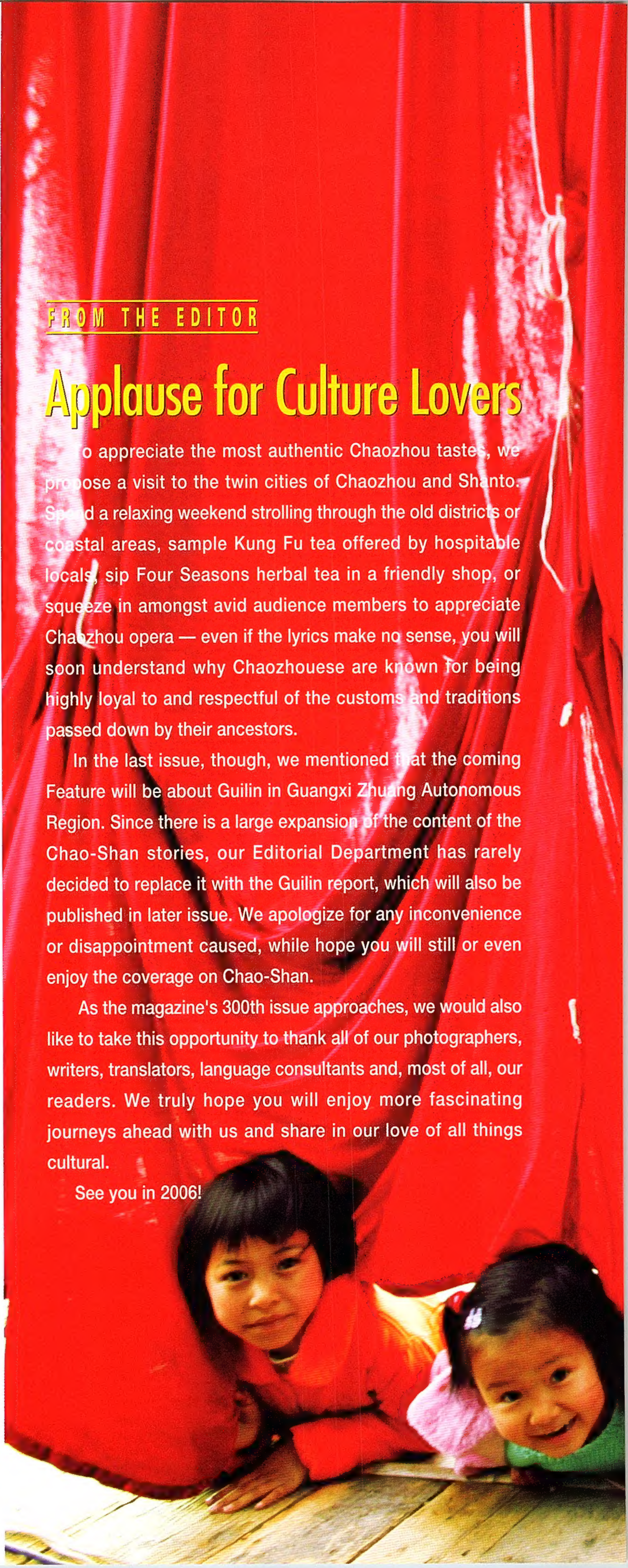
No.300 Nov/Dec 2005



FROM THE EDITOR

Applause for Culture Lovers

To appreciate the most authentic Chaozhou tastes, we propose a visit to the twin cities of Chaozhou and Shanto. Spend a relaxing weekend strolling through the old districts or coastal areas, sample Kung Fu tea offered by hospitable locals, sip Four Seasons herbal tea in a friendly shop, or squeeze in amongst avid audience members to appreciate Chaozhou opera — even if the lyrics make no sense, you will soon understand why Chaozhouese are known for being highly loyal to and respectful of the customs and traditions passed down by their ancestors.

In the last issue, though, we mentioned that the coming Feature will be about Guilin in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Since there is a large expansion of the content of the Chao-Shan stories, our Editorial Department has rarely decided to replace it with the Guilin report, which will also be published in later issue. We apologize for any inconvenience or disappointment caused, while hope you will still or even enjoy the coverage on Chao-Shan.

As the magazine's 300th issue approaches, we would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our photographers, writers, translators, language consultants and, most of all, our readers. We truly hope you will enjoy more fascinating journeys ahead with us and share in our love of all things cultural.

See you in 2006!

Curious children peek at a Chaozhon opera crew before showtime (by Wong Chung Fai)

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The deluxe five-star Royal Mediterranean Hotel is the epitome of luxury and elegance where international business and leisure travellers are pampered with stylish comforts, contemporary amenities and impeccable service. Located in the exciting Tianhe District of Guangzhou, the hotel is a mere 10-minute's drive from the East Train Station, 15 minutes from the Convention Centre, 40 minutes from the Baiyun International Airport and subway stations are within walking distance.

The 400 elegant rooms and suites have been designed to reflect the comforts and convenience of a private residence.

The Royal Mediterranean Hotel prides itself in having the most spacious baths available in China, featuring separate showers, vanity areas and private bar stocked with complimentary soft drinks, hair dryer, safe deposit box, and bathrobe, Internet access, Satellite TV and most rooms with plasma TV.

The hotel offers an exquisite selection of gourmet dining and entertainment venues in addition to tastefully furnished private rooms:

Grand Ballroom The imposing pillarless Grand Ballroom can accommodate up to 360 people for banquets, 800 for cocktail receptions and can be adapted for any other function. Our specially-trained staff are also dedicated to plan and oversee all the necessary details and arrangements for meetings, or Chinese and Western banquets.

Jun Lin Court Chinese Restaurant Our signature restaurant-Jun Lin Court Chinese Restaurant boasts exquisite Cantonese cuisine created by award-winning Chef. Located on the 6th floor, it features a contemporary dining area, and a choice of private dining rooms for private or business entertainment.

Chaozhou Restaurant In Chaozhou Restaurant, our Chef uses the most original recipes and freshest ingredients to create authentic Chaozhou cuisine with its unique flavour and tastes. Located on the 5th floor, it has a main dining hall and private rooms of various sizes for more intimate dining.

Japanese Restaurant Located on the 5th floor, our Japanese Restaurant is the place where you can savour all your favourite Japanese dishes, and try the daily selection of seasonal items from Japan in a relaxed atmosphere. Our teppanyaki features an array of surf and turf as well as a splendid selection of fresh vegetables.

Mediterranean Cafe Located on the 2nd floor, Mediterranean Cafe with its open show kitchen offers an array of cuisine from all over the world to satisfy the varied tastes of our guests from different countries. It features daily international buffet and an extensive a-la-carte menu for all day dining.

Mediterranean Grill Room Located within the Mediterranean Coffee House, the Mediterranean Grill with its elegant and romantic setting serves French, Italian and a mixture of fusion cuisine. There are also fine wines from famous French and Italian cellars to accompany the fine cuisine.

Mediterranean International Club Located on the 3rd floor covering an area of over 10,000 square metres, the Mediterranean Club is elegantly decorated and equipped with the most advanced audio-visual system. Each of the 80 KTV rooms has a distinctive style of its own.

M Bar & Lounge Located on the 3rd floor, it is the perfect place to relax and unwind after a hard day's work. Whether it is drinking exotic cocktail or sipping fine wine, the elegant and luxurious M Bar & Lounge with its nightly live entertainment is the place to be seen.

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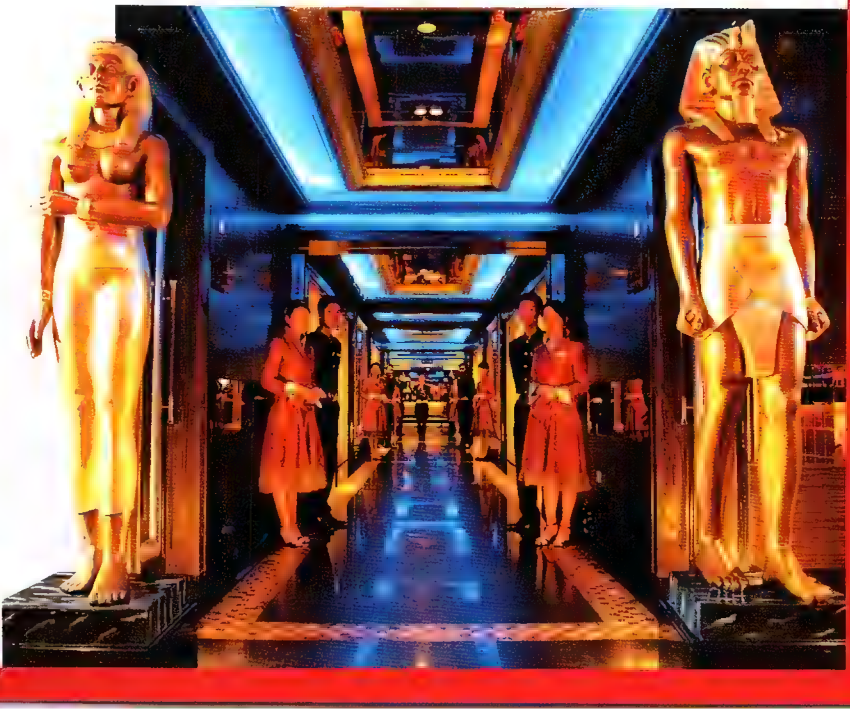

White Tigers on Exhibition at Macau Tower

A pair of six-months old white tiger cubs from Panyu Xiangjiang Safari Park are appointed Ambassadors-in-Residence in Macau Tower, charged with the mission of advancing public awareness of animal conservation. The exhibition started from September 30, 2005 and will lasts for six months. Macau Tower has constructed a jungle-themed home and prepared all daily arrangements for the cubs. Interested individuals are welcome to participate in naming the white tiger cubs by visiting: http://www.macautower.com.mo/

White tiger is one of the most endangered species in the world with an estimated 500 in existence. Currently, there are approximately 200 found in China. In the traditional Chinese culture, white tiger is honoured as a sacred animal appearing as an emblem of mascot.

Hong Kong Still Ranks Asia's First Shopping Centre

A recent survey conducted by MasterCard in late August revealed that the Hong Kong kept its leading position in Asia to be the best shopping place due to its geographical locations and various top-branded products from Europe and the United States.

By 2011, tourism revenue from shopping in Hong Kong is expected to reach 11 billion US dollars from the six billion US dollars in 2006. Bangkok of Thailand and Seoul from Korea are listed on the second and third places respectively.

Times Square

Refreshed New Equator Club Lounge and Club Rooms

After a three-month refurbishment, the New Equator Club Lounge and Club rooms, which are located at the 22nd floor and 27th floor of the Hotel Equatorial Shanghai has reopened on August 1, 2005.

The new Equator Club Lounge, with its newly decorated guest seats, delicate buffet table, and a jumbo plasma TV screen, along with the specially designed mini library, creates an exclusive retreat with special privileges and service for the discerning guests.

The Equator Club Lounge and Club rooms offers express check in and check out on the 26th floor, breakfast in the morning, wireless high-dpeed Internet access is also available on the 27th floor. There are four Club Boardrooms that can accommodate three to 13 persons with stunning views over this modern city.

Add: 65 Yan'an Road West Shanghai, 200040
Website: www.equatorial.com

Extension of Macau Fisherman's Wharf

Centrally located at Macau's outer harbour, the first phase of the Fisherman's Wharf is divided into three themed sections: Dynasty Wharf, East Meets West, and Legend Wharf. Covering over one million square feet, the phase one project combines entertainment, shopping centres, restaurants, hotel, marina and convention facilities in one place. The second phase extension project of the Fisherman's Wharf will be providing more accommodation and recreational facilities for visitors to Macau.

The First E-Airport in China to Be Launched in 2007

Guangzhou's Baiyun International Airport would become the first e-airport in China upon its completion on public data system in 2007. The system would enable passengers to get the latest information about the airport and flights, such as ticket prices, flight delays and stores in the airport. An e-boarding pass facility will be included in the system that enables the airport to locate the late boarders and urge them to board.

Ocean Park Plans New Facilities

The Ocean Park in Hong Kong plans to invest a total of 5.5 billion Hong Kong dollars in expanding the park, with the intention of making it become the most excellent ocean theme park in the world. The expansion work is expected to start off next year and finish by 2012. The number of large entertainment facilities is expected to be doubled to about 70. Ocean Park said the expansion does not aim to compete with Disneyland, as Ocean Park displays more of nature, ocean and animals, the two parks served as complementary to each other with different types of pleasures.

Dongguan Plans to Build Bar Museum

The Guangdong city plans to build the museum by 2008, located in Dongcheng Nan Lu (Road South) where lots of bars and taverns can be found. Modelling the Red Wine Museum in Macau, the museum will showcase the development of the industry, bar culture in the world and its history in China.

HK Disneyland Continues to Expand

Hong Kong Disneyland will be expanded by adding new attractions and improving services each year. Family tourism will be promoted and more attention will be paid to suit local culture, since the target customer of the theme park is visitor from Mainland China. In a short term, transport and crowd-control measures are in place to ensure a smooth operation.

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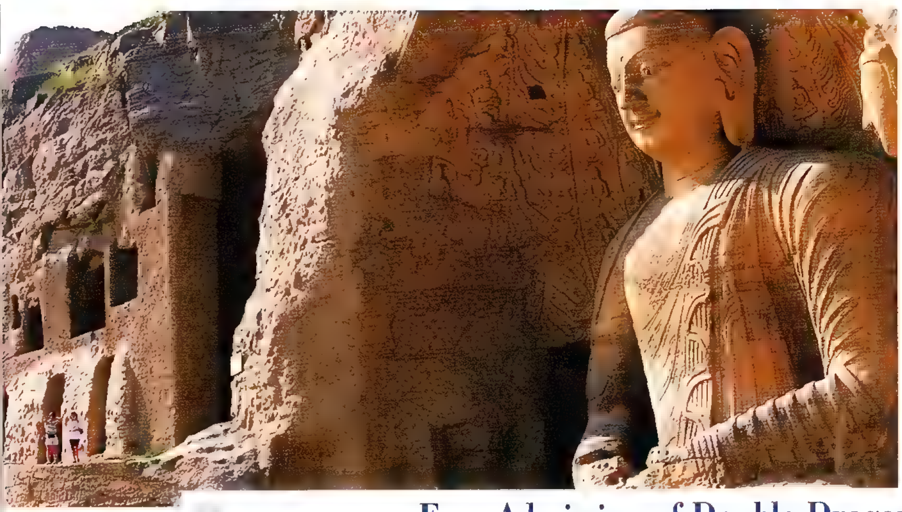
Call for Protection of Traditional Operas

Henan is known as "hometown for Chinese operas", which proudly boosted 65 kinds of domestic plays. However, according to survey conducted by 300-plus professors and undergraduates of the Henan University, there are only about 30 of them preserved to this date. Many of the plays are facing the fate of extinction in the next generation. The students and teachers now actively call on the public to protect these traditional domestic operas.

Weathering and Leaking of Yungang Grottoes

Due to prolonged contact with water, the rock of Yungang Grottoes, one of the World Heritage sites in Shanxi Province, is found having serious weathering and leaking problems. Leaking situation has been recorded from 21 out of the 45 exsisting caves. The Wuhua (Five China) Cave is the worst hit one. A project specialized to tackle the problem is planned to release.



Free Admission of Double Dragon Lake & Park

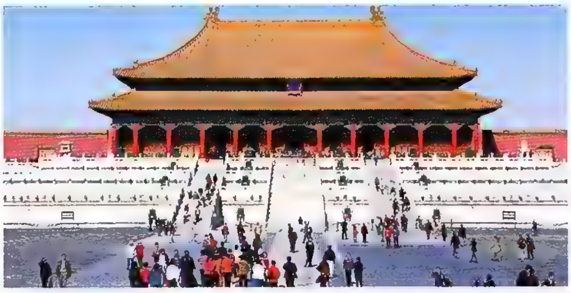
Located at the centre of the Lianglucheng (Two-Road City), the Shuanglonghu (Double Dragon Lake) Park covers 260 *mu* (39 hectares), and the Park 170 *mu* (25.5 hectares). The construction involved RMB1.6 million. A promenade of 2.5-metre-wide, 4.8-km-long has also been built for tourists to stroll along and appreciate the surrounding scene.

New Measurement of Huangguoshu

The Huangguoshu Waterfall, largest one among its kind in China, was re-measured by a team of scientists in this July. With the help of ultra red equipment and Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, a new measurement of the waterfall was being recorded. The waterfall is 101 metres wide and 83.3 metres wide at the top of its major body. The project was funded by the Guizhou Provincial Land and Resources Department.

Part of Forbidden City Renovation Completed

After a two-year's renovation, the Hall of Military Prowess (Wuying Dian) has opened to public recently, added with a cultural exhibition where some of the classic and Buddhist books of the Qing Dynasty (1644 — 1911) are on display. The Hall of Military Prowess was built in 1420 covering an area of 12,000 square metres.



XINJIANG

New Tourist Centre at Kanas

The new building, named Jiadengyu Tourist Centre, is located 30 km out of the Kanas Lake Scenic Area. It features cozy accommodation, restaurants, entertainment and other equipments. Two treatment plants on sewage and wasted materials have also been built respectively. The old tourist centre at the outlying areas of Kanas will soon be demolished. Only a few huts which match harmonious with the overall scenery will be remained for tourists' stay or shopping.

TIBET

Qinghai-Tibet Railway to Be Completed

The Golmud-Tibet part of the railway is 1,142 km, the Tanggular Mountains part, covering 140 km, passes the worst weather, most complex frozen earth, and most fragile ecosystem. Recently, the base, tunnel, and bridge connection parts have been completed. When the 1,070-km-long rail is paved, the railway can be opened for use.

HEILONGJIANG

Beidahuang Museum Opens

Covering 10,000 square metres with over 5,000 display items, the museum reflects the hardships of three generations of the people living in Beidahuang, referring to the Great Northern Wilderness in northeast China.

HUNAN

Tianmenshan National Forest Park Opens

Invested with over RMB5.5 billion, the Tianmenshan (Heaven Gate Mountain) Forest Park located in Hunan's famous Zhangjiajie Scenic Area has opened for the public. The park boosts Asia's longest cableway, accompanied with other scenic spots like Tianmen Cave, Tianmen Academy, and a temple, etc.

ZHEJIANG

Cruising on Qinhuai River

After renovation for almost three years, Qinhuai River flowing through the Nanjing city, Zhejiang Province, has been largely cleaned. Beside, eight cruises are arranged to open for tourists to appreciate the scenery of the riverbank.

MACAU

World's First SkyJump

The SkyJump, a new attraction at Macau Tower that let participants fly through air at 75 km/hour in 20 seconds over the breathtaking cityscape of Macau, will be the highest adventure of its kind around the world. Taking off from the outer rim of Macau Tower 233 metres aboveground, it is an astounding 41 metres higher than the only other SkyJump in the world at Sky Tower Auckland where the world's highest bungy record was created.

China

213 Cities Honoured Excellent Tourism Cities

The newly-add seven cities which have reached the standard of excellent cities included Panjin (Liaoning Province), Xinxiang (Henan Province), Jingdezhen (Jiangxi Province), Meizhou and Maoming (Guangdong Province), and Yibin and Ya'an (Sichuan Province). The assessment, based on the use of tourism resources and tourism design of the candidate cities, started in 1996.

Shanghai

Metro Fares Raised

In purpose to encourage more people to take bus especially during rush hours, the city's transport authority has raised metro fares for the shortest ride from 2 yuan to 3 yuan across the city's three subway lines. For distance travel, the lowest fare is for the first 6 km, and increase 1 yuan for each additional 10 km. There is no change for price of trips longer than 28 km.

Jiangxi

New Flight Between Guangzhou and Jinggangshan

The route, launched by the China Southern Airlines in mid-August, will fly between the two cities every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. The Jinggangshan Airport will open air routes to other major cities such as Shenzhen, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Xiamen to growing number of tourists. Jinggangshan Mountains was known as the cradle of the Chinese Communist Party, where late Chairman Mao Zedong established the first revolutionary base.

China

Average Minimum Price for Outbound Tour Packages

The National Tourism Administration has published a handbook giving the average price for 12 very similar outbound tour packages. Tourists can compare the official prices with those offered by travel agencies, so to make better choices when planning their travels.

Shenzhen

Waive of Russian Visas After National Day

Tourists from Shenzhen will no longer be required to apply for visas to enter Russia after National Day (October 1), it they sign up for package tours of more than five people with local travel agencies. Russia has become a hot destination among Shenzhen residents these years.

Fujian

Official Launch of Hong Kong Express

A fixed-wing jet sister operation to HeliExpress, one of the world's largest helicopter airlines that offers high frequency flights between Hong Kong, Macau and Shenzhen, the Hong Kong Express has officially launched in early August this year. In addition to offering the comfort of a well designed 2 + 2 single class cabin onboard Asia's first new Embraer 170 jets. The airline now commences flight between the territory and Guangzhou, and will introduce services to Hangzhou, Nanjing, Chongqing and Ningbo gradually.

Nov/Dec

Nov 13 ~ Dec 5

Fourth Macau Food Festival

Venue: Sai Van Lake Square, Macau

What's on: It promises to be an exchange platform for cuisines from Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore. The Festival will be divided into themed areas of "Macau Street", "South East Asia Street", "Greater China Street" and "Portugal Street", providing delicacies from the different regions.

Until end of 2005

Hunan Tourism Festival

Venue: Yanling County

What's On: With dragon dances, gala shows and sacrificial rites at Yandi Tomb, Hunan Province has kicked off the China Hunan Tourism Festival. The programme, highlighting the province's more than 5,000 years of civilization, runs until the end of this year.

RECLAMATION WORK
SAFE

Nov 6-13

"Victoria Harbour and I" Photo Competition and Exhibition

Venue: Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong.

What's On: To raise public awareness and promote concern about the need to protect Victoria Harbour, "Victoria Harbour and I" Photo Competition and Exhibition will be launched. The photo competition is scheduled to run from 10 September to 12 October 2005. Prizes will be presented to award winning photos on 6 November, and a special exhibition of the best and most interesting photos will be on display from 6 November to 13 November 2005.

For details: http://www.harbourprotection.org/html/all_page_b_b5.htm

Dec 27~31

60th Hong Kong Int'l Salon of Photography

Venue: Causeway Bay, Hong Kong

What's On: The Society will hold its 60th Hong Kong International Salon of Photography at the Exhibition Gallery of Hong Kong Central Library, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong from 27 to 31 December. Photographers from local and overseas are cordially invited to participate.

For details: http://www.photographic-society-hk.com/activities.html

Nov 20 - 22

Chinese Traditional Martial Arts Festival

Venue: Kaiyuan, Yunnan

What's On: With the theme "Carry Forward the Martial Art Culture and Promote the Regional Martial Arts Development" this festival will provide a stage for the demonstration of different forms of Chinese martial arts. The aim is to provide a better understanding of the variety and complexity of Chinese martial arts.

December 12 (tbc)

The Hong Kong International Races

Venue: Sha Tin racecourse

What's On: The Hong Kong International Races is the biggest racing event in Asia and one of the richest race meetings in the world. The highlight of the day is the Cathay Pacific Hong Kong Cup, the final leg of the Emirates World Series Racing Championship.

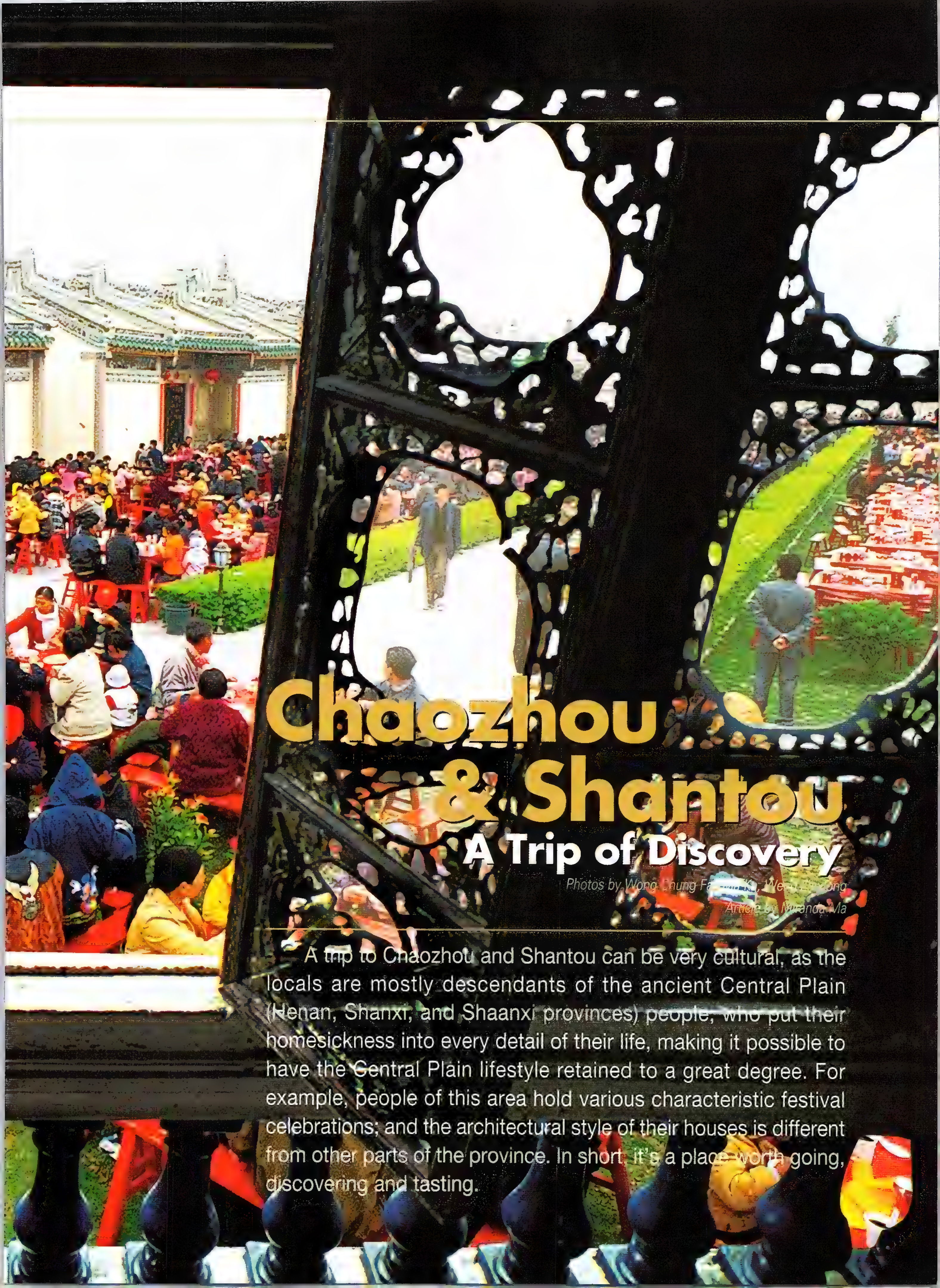
Nov 13

Matilda Sedan Chair Race

Venue: The Peak, Hong Kong

What's On: The annual Sedan Chair Race is the main fundraising event of the Matilda Sedan Chair Race Charities Fund. It consists of teams carrying a sedan chair racing around the Peak on a choice of one of two routes (3.2km for course A and 2.1km for course B), starting from The Matilda International Hospital. Teams from a broad cross-section of Hong Kong are all welcome to join the Race.

For details: http://www.sedanchairace.org/



Chaozhou & Shantou

A Trip of Discovery

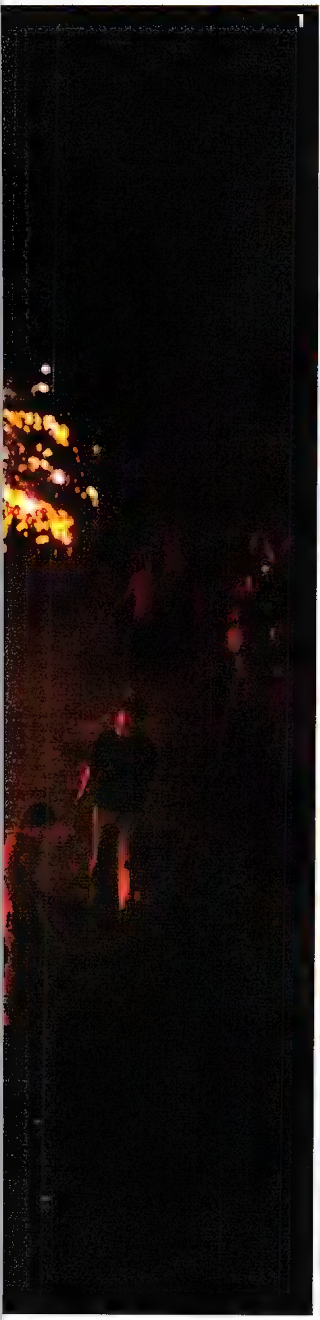
Photos by Wong Chung Fa[illegible] Ka, We[illegible]ong
Article by Miranda Ma

A trip to Chaozhou and Shantou can be very cultural, as the locals are mostly descendants of the ancient Central Plain (Henan, Shanxi, and Shaanxi provinces) people, who put their homesickness into every detail of their life, making it possible to have the Central Plain lifestyle retained to a great degree. For example, people of this area hold various characteristic festival celebrations; and the architectural style of their houses is different from other parts of the province. In short, it's a place worth going, discovering and tasting.

Chaozhou
Fire Dragon Dance

Fire Dragon Show is a local custom that has existed for more than 200 years. Today, in the 21st century, it has not only been retained, but has become a more fierce game to attract almost 30,000 enthusiastic natives and visitors.

For over 200 years, it has been the custom of the locals of the Puzhai Town in Fengxian County of Meizhou, to have a Fire Dragon Show to celebrate major events and festivals, such as the Spring Festival, or the Chinese New Year. The grandest one is held during the Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the first lunar month (Chinese Valentine's Day), which expresses people's wishes for favourite weather and bumper harvests in the coming year.



1. Fire dragon dance in Meizhou attracts a big crowd of audience every year (by Ma Ka)
2. Final check of the Fire Dragon frame (by Zhang Chuxiang)
3. There are also "FireChicks" (by Wong Chung Fai)

A Dragon with Fireworks On

When I arrived at the Ancestors' hall of the town, the dragons were already lying in the middle of the hall, and the models of other animals, such as turtles, carps and prawns, were all ready. The villagers had spent two weeks to make preparations for the event. They had made three dragons, each costing more than 100,000 yuan.

I stepped up and saw the dragons were all fixed with big and small fireworks. When the fire dragons were taken out, the fireworks would be fired and the same thing would happen to the other animals, which also had fireworks on their bodies. All of a sudden, there would be dancing flames and deafening cracks everywhere.

Fireworks Signify the Jubilance

In the afternoon, the villagers were giving a last touch to their fire dragons. In the evening, when I came to the playground for the event, there

was already a sea of people. Obviously, it was not only the elderly who were interested in the show. On my way, I came up to several children who held torches in their hands. They were so excited that it seemed they were going to become emperors. For young men and women, the Fire Dragon Show provided them a wonderful time to get together. Peddlers also took this opportunity to sell drinks, toys and snacks.

When the air was filled with increasingly heavier smoke of fireworks, the crow became turbulent. At around 8 p.m., there came thunderous cracks. In the following second, the fish and prawns all pour out flames, while people cried and shouted with joys. Then the first fire dragon appeared, with a procession of about 30 metres long. About 200 people walked with it in the parade. When the fireworks cracked even louder, I felt pain in my ears. The fire dragon and the procession circled the playground several rounds before they retreated.

Smoke Gets in My Eyes

There was a quiet moment after the first fire dragon left, but there were still sounds of humming in my ears. When the second fire dragon came out, it happened again that the crowd moved

1. Villagers carry lanterns to watch the Fire Dragon show (by Ma Ka)
2. The 30-metre-long dragon body is viewed clearly from afar (by Wong Chung Fai)
3. All one can see close to the dragon is smoke (by Miranda Ma)
4. Village children holding flaming rope are to keep the crowd in order (by Miranda Ma)

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around and the fireworks cracked. There seemed to be a battle. I dashed to the dragon for getting a close shot of the dragonhead. It was not easy, though, as the villagers following the dragon all had a torch in hand to drive away others so as to guarantee the fire dragon would not be blocked. The villagers in the front were disturbed when those staying behind kept pushing forward. When the torch-holders came, however, everybody retreated. In the darkness, surrounded by the turbulent stream of crowd and the strong smell of fire powder, I felt I was in a town to be taken by the enemy.

Whatever happened, I pressed my way on. The players of the fire dragon were all young men around 20 years old. Wearing no tops, they were sweating.

When the last fire dragon was gone and there came the cool breeze, I noticed how I had sweated. The whole show lasted for less than 30 minutes. Now I became totally smoked; when I tried to wipe off the dust from my coat, I found there was a big whole.

From the newspaper of the next day, I learned that the Fire Dragon Show had attracted more than 30,000 spectators. So there is the 200-year-old dragon, which is as young and as powerful as it was.

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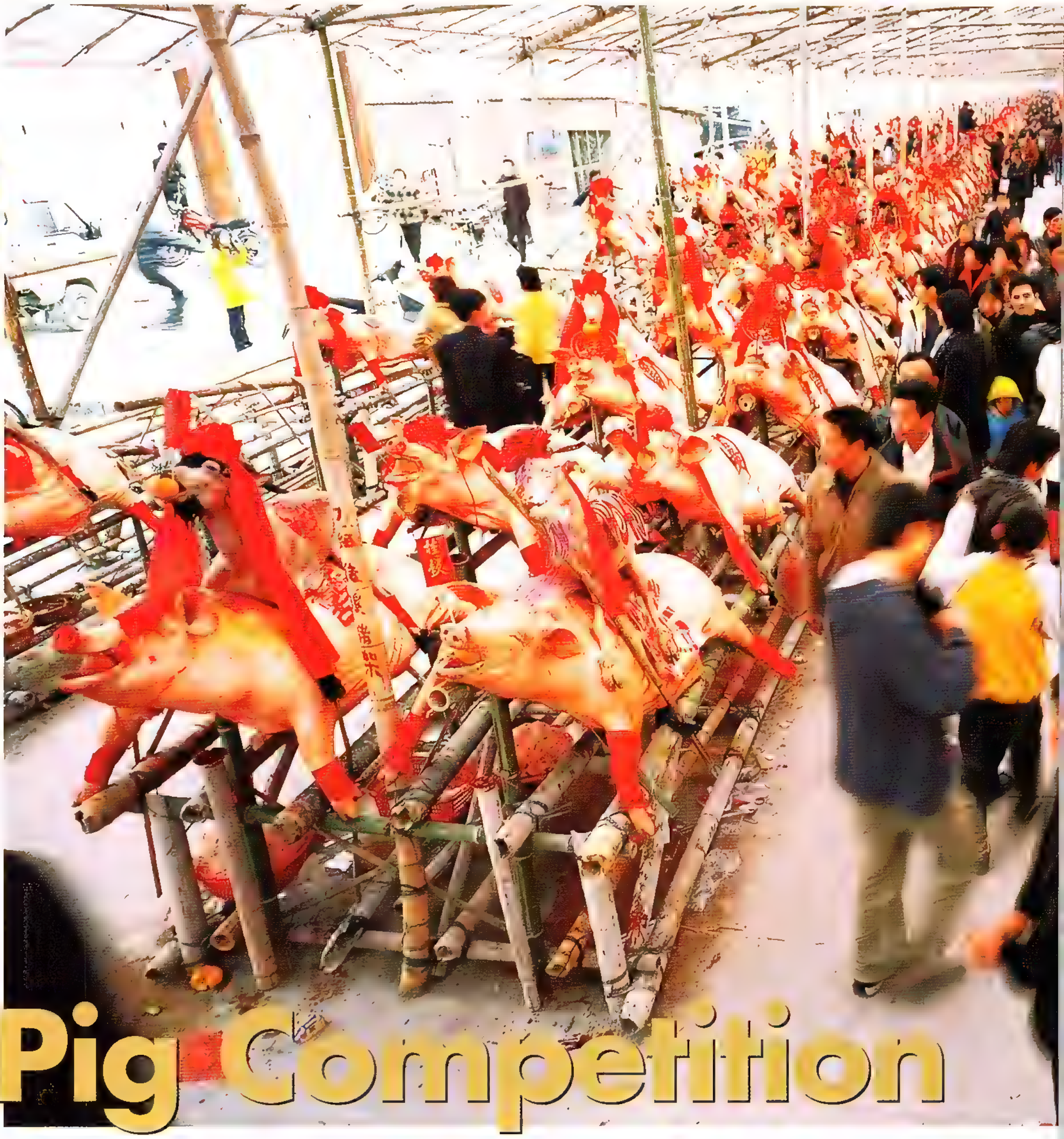


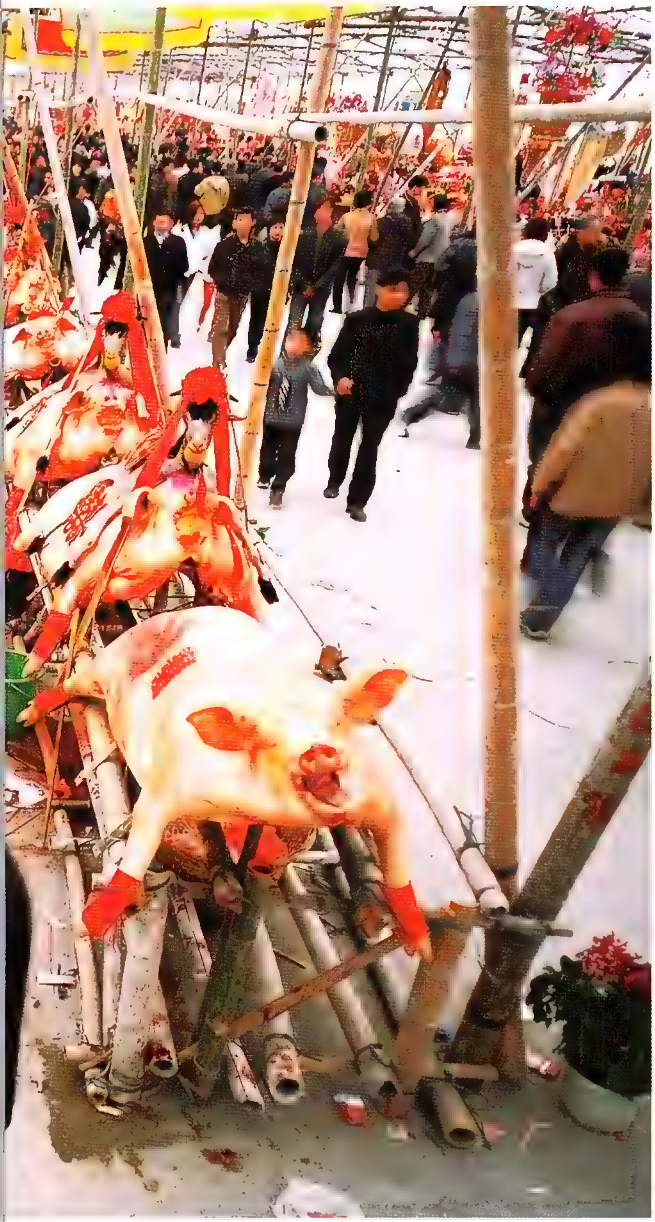
Big Pig Competition

The Big Pig Competition provides the most magnificent and most scaring scene among all the Chaozhou-Shantou folk activities. Those who never heard of it may think it's a game of pig race, but in fact, it's a slaughter of 1,000 pigs in one day, which is believed to be able to expel bad omen and bring in peace and safety.

Probably because of the film *Babe*, I, too, took the Big Pig Competition as a race on the grass. In my imagination, the champion would be so excited that it runs to the embrace of its owner, and thereafter, it would live a happy life.

Now I know I made a beautiful mistake. The fattest pigs are always the first to be slaughtered as sacrifices to the ancestors and gods. It's too bad that pigs eat too much and pay too little attention to fitness. In the end, they can do nothing but serve as sacrifices.

The venue of the current Big Pig Competition was in Huamei Village of the Caitang Township, Chao'an County. It smelt something even on the



1. Villagers carry out the statue of "Old Lord" at a sacrificial ceremony before the Big Pig Race is kicked off (by Wong Chung Fai)
2. A shocking sight of displaying 1,000 slaughtered pigs (by Wong Chung Fai)
3. Cleaning the body of a pig (by Wong Chung Fai)

way to the village. Every household was busy, boiling chickens and geese, or making cakes. It was a warm day and villagers wore smiles on their faces.

Preparation for the Race

On a piece of flat land, the villagers have built an altar. In front of it, there was a makeshift platform. To me, a visitor, the altar looked more like an amusement court. It shined with various colours, with trotting horse lamps as high as I am, in addition to column-like incense sticks and sacrifices of all kinds, cakes, fruits, seafood, cigarettes and pagodas and mini-plants made of sugar.

I was told the Big Pig Competition of this year was especially fantastic. All villagers in Huamei Village belong to the Xu family. Their ancestor had three sons, whose later generations developed into 30 branches. They hold the competition in turn and each branch is responsible for a year. As the one responsible for this year's events is a very thriving branch, with a total of 1,025 households, it happened that as many as 1,000 pigs were killed on the day.

The families began to buy their pigs a year before so as to raise and fatten them. An elderly man told me that it was a rare scene that 1,000 pigs were slaughtered for one event, and he had

1. A villager is double-checking the ornaments put on the pigs (by Wong Chung Fai)
2. Even golden ear-ring is chosen (by Miranda Ma)
3. Sacrificial items include vintage wine and lobsters (by Wong Chung Fai)

seen only three in his life: one in his childhood; one in his youth; and the third one took place when he was close to 80.

Pigs and Lambs Decorated with Goldand Silver

The masses at the venue became even more excited when newly slaughtered pigs were moved in. Several villagers helped set the pigs onto shelves. They wiped the blood and put an orange in each pig's mouth. Some of the pigs had been dyed into pink; some even had gold earrings on. When the pigs were settled, the villagers began to display the lambs. With a rope fixed on the ceiling of the bamboo shelter, they hang the lambs from the head, making the slaughtered animals look as lively. There were six or seven people working for each lamb. Whatever they do for it, cleaning or putting on earrings, they had a heartfelt happy smile on the face.

The pigs were weighed before they were put onto the shelves. The biggest, of course, would be placed in front of the ceremonial platform as the main sacrifice to the ancestors. For its owner, it would be an unmatchable great honour.

The Big Pig Competition attracted almost everyone in the surrounding villages. The elderly and housewives were there; fashionable girls who had dyed their hairs golden and youngsters holding mobile phones with photographing function had also come in groups of three or five. The villagers were well disciplined, though. Nobody would touch the gold earrings worn by the pigs, nor the valuable sacrifices on the table; on the owners' side, they never thought about losing anything. A successful competition is indeed the most important thing for everyone.

The custom of Big Pig Competition started in the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644). One year, plague attacked the Chaozhou-Shantou area and took many lives. To protect themselves, the villagers used pigs as their sacrifices to expel the bad luck and revitalize their families. When the custom was passed down, it eventually became a ceremony to show respect for the ancestors. As long as people's health is concerned, so far, over the past 400 years, no problem has ever emerged from the massacre of pigs.

The old district of Xiao Gong Yuan is the landmark of Shantou (by Miranda Ma)

A Stroll Through Shantou

New, trendy cities have been sprouting up throughout China but underneath the glossy veneer they aren't anything special. Fortunately, one coastal city has managed to retain its timeworn houses and an atmosphere of purity and simplicity, despite its growing modernity.

That city is Shantou.

To talk about Shantou, one must begin with the landmark of the city—Haibin Road.

Staying by the sea, my first task each day is to wander along the shore. The elderly like to congregate along the coastal road every morning, practising Chaozhou Opera, Tai Chi, dancing or just gathering to sip Chaozhou Kung-fu tea. The coast road is long; it would take almost an hour to explore carefully on foot.

I saw a Chaozhou Opera troupe in the distance and walked over to them. Two smiling older ladies greeted me by addressing me in the Chaozhou dialect. I was offered tea repeatedly by one of the women. Right up until I took my leave, I had no clue what they were saying, but I understood their affability and kindness perfectly.

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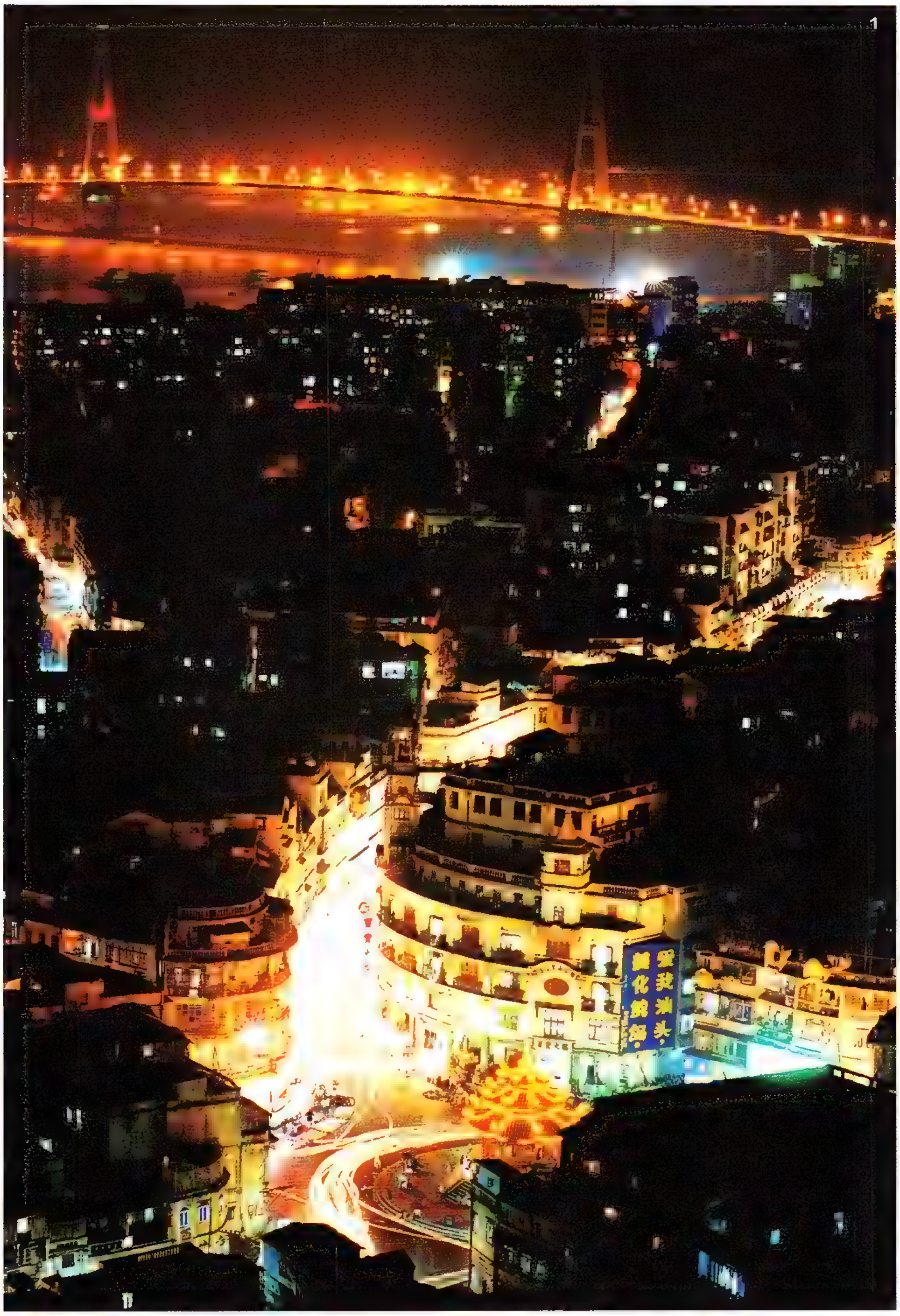

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1. A charming night scene in Shantou (by Weng Zhixiong)
2. The local market nearby Xiao Gong Yuan (by Wong Chung Fai)
3. Chaozhou opera and dance are performed every day in Haibin Road (by Weng Zhixiong)
4. Bars in Shantou (Wong Chung Fai)

Drinking Herbal Tea in the Old District

Xiao Gong Yuan, which literally means "Small Park", is not a park at all. It is the old district of Shantou, where the city was first established. Century-old buildings are chock-a-block here. The tricycle was going too quickly for my liking, so I decided to get off and walk.

Due to market pressures, old buildings in Xiao Gong Yuan are routinely renovated and some are even dismantled. Perhaps in a few years it will become just another shopping district of Guangdong.

My favourite excursion is a visit to the

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Budweiser
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Zhengshunzhi Four Seasons Tea House. Once you get to know the serving staff well, you are always treated to a complimentary tea tasting. This is how I have managed to drink every single type of herbal tea they serve.

Nightlife Options

The women of Shantou are very modern: they dress in tight-fitting trousers, wear their hair long and straightened, and talk loudly and quickly. Many go out to drink in bars, dance, listen to music and meet friends in coffee houses at night. If you have enough money, it's easy to spend an evening out in Shantou.

Winters here are cold, and I discovered there were few experiences nicer than reading a book in a warm room, with the rain pelting down outside and a hot lemon Coke to hand.

Pretending to Be a Local

Being extremely tired, I hail a motor tricycle on my way back to the hotel. Speaking Mandarin, I told the driver "most are from Anhui or Henan" that the hotel was on the coastal road.

"Are you on holiday, Miss?" They all like to ask this.

"I've been here for about six months. Hey, could you turn right here? It's quicker this way."

The road layout in Shantou is easy to remember, you get the idea in about two days. But some motor tricycle drivers here are not the most honest of men, and it's better to pretend you know the city like the back of your hand.

We arrived at the hotel and I gave him three yuan.

"Aw, Miss, you're not going to give me more?"

"I've been here for half a year, don't try that on me," I smile.

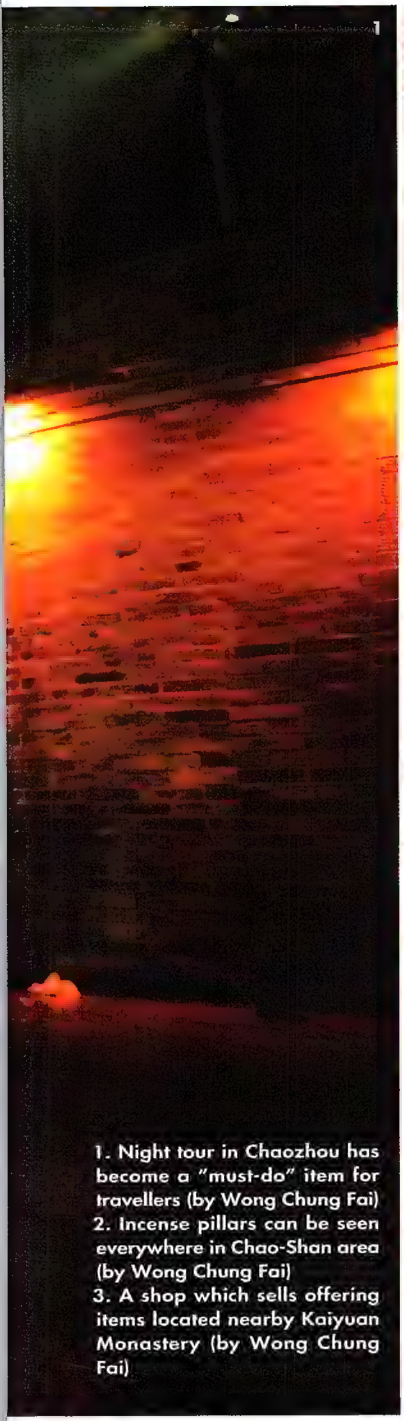
Chaozhou:
The Older the Better

I mentioned I was going to Chaozhou; "It's old-fashioned" and "boring" was what I got in response. But when I arrived, I found pleasant surprises around every corner.

The old city of Chaozhou, with a history spanning 1,600 years, seems to be improving with age.

Deeply Influenced by Literature

Chaozhou is the kind of place where you can spend a lazy afternoon flicking through a book of Tang poems over a pot of tea. Indeed, as soon as you set foot in this city, you get the urge to pick up a book. This stems from the Chaozhounese being taught a thousand years ago by the banished Tang



1. Night tour in Chaozhou has become a "must-do" item for travellers (by Wong Chung Fai)
2. Incense pillars can be seen everywhere in Chao-Shan area (by Wong Chung Fai)
3. A shop which sells offering items located nearby Kaiyuan Monastery (by Wong Chung Fai)

poet Han Yu, who instilled in them that respect for books was paramount.

Relics are Treasures Here

A history of a thousand years could be said to be a burden or a blessing, but I am sure if nothing else those years have produced in its people a deep love for the city. The Old Town in Chaozhou is a little tired-looking; I guess people born and bred in such an old city will only ever repair its old and shabby walls and streets to look just as old and shabby.

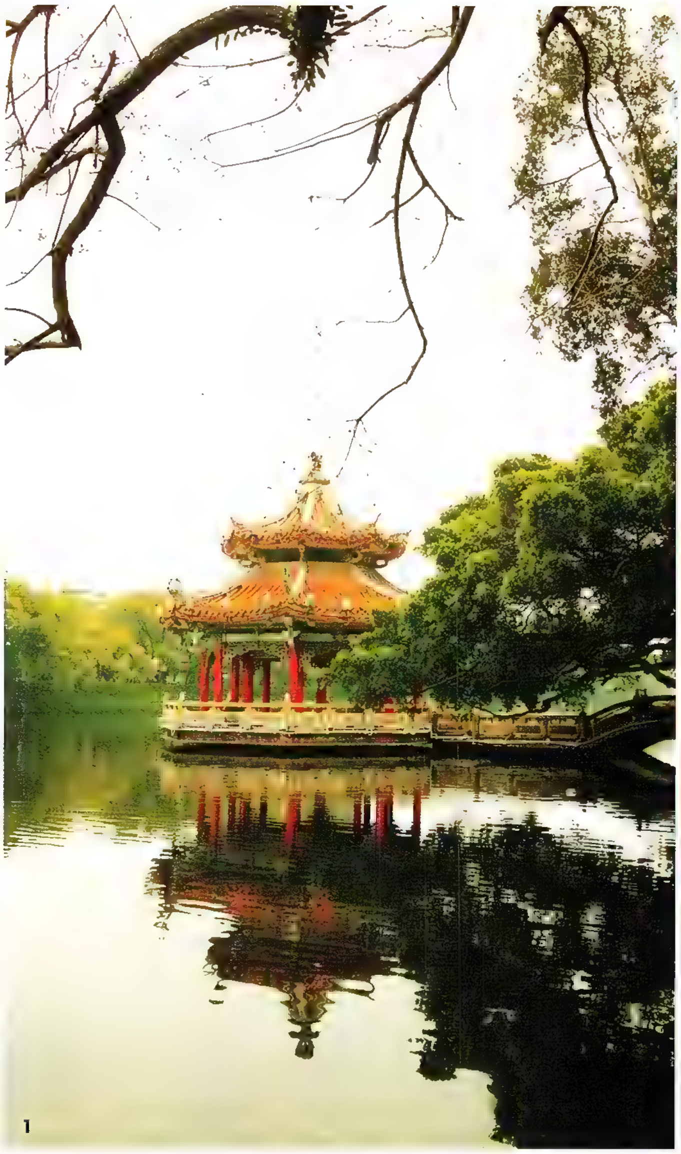
Standing underneath the old city wall, I was amazed at how this new structure could look so old. Walking into the Old Town, I noticed a gateway commemorating Han Yu standing in the middle of a road. From a modern, financial point of view, this pile of stones really should be moved, but instead the whole street layout was modified to accommodate this lone archway. What is even more amazing is that this bothersome archway has now been turned into a tourist attraction and a definite stop for any visitor to Chaozhou.

In slovenly clothes, even Helen of Troy wouldn't be permitted to enter some of the historic buildings here in Chaozhou. The Old Town of Chaozhou is very fortunate, not only are its old buildings preserved well, its shops and residences are also in tip top condition, locals need exert no special effort, they live their normal lives inside the Old Town, and we drive by in our hired sampans. This is actually exactly what we, the tourists want: not some fake imitation, but an authentic Old Town that is alive and kicking.

Chaozhou owes its successful tourism industry to the development of modern technology. For example Kaiyuan Temple, dating from the first year of the Tang Dynasty (618), is equipped with a fully-interactive computer connected to the Chaozhou Tourism Bureau, allowing visitors to look up tourist information free of charge. Who says that technology and culture are like oil and water? Duck and water seems more appropriate.

Mesmerizing Night-Life

Night tours around Chaozhou's Old Town have been in fashion in these last few years. Why? Locals tell me, with great pride, that it is because the Old Town has an amazing atmosphere when the city walls are lit up by coloured lights. I came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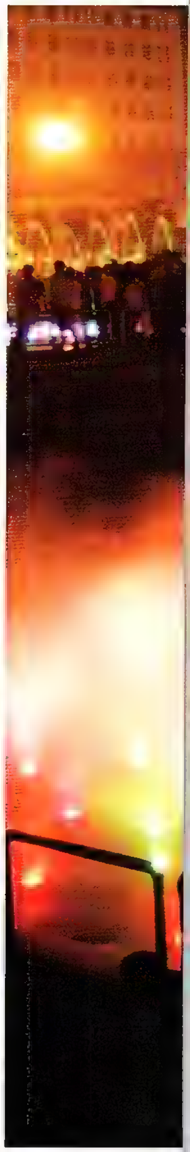

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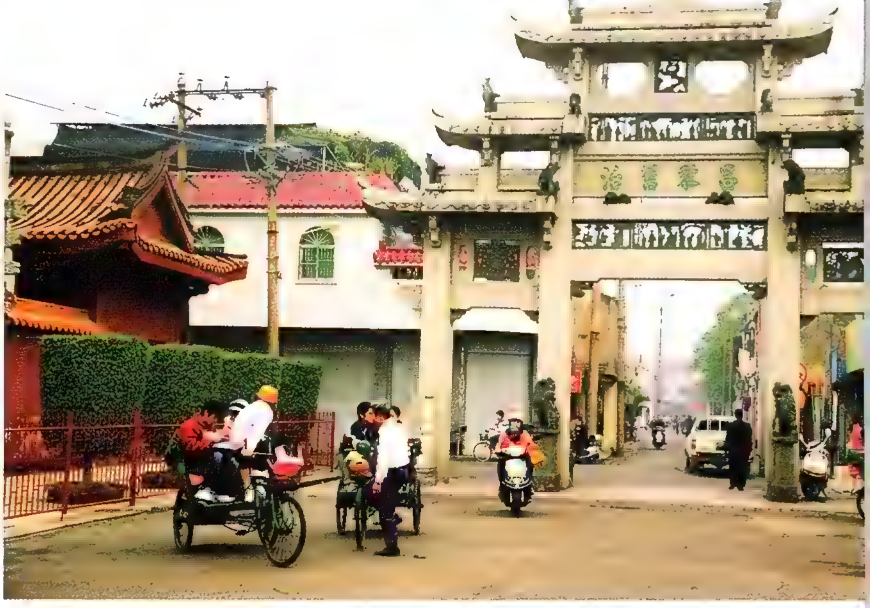


1. The Chaozhou West Lake located in city centre enjoys in tranquility (by Wong Chung Fai)
2. The gateway commemorating Tang poet Han Yu stands in the middle of a road (by Wong Chung Fai)
3. The musical fountain display is very popular among locals (by Chan Yat Nin)

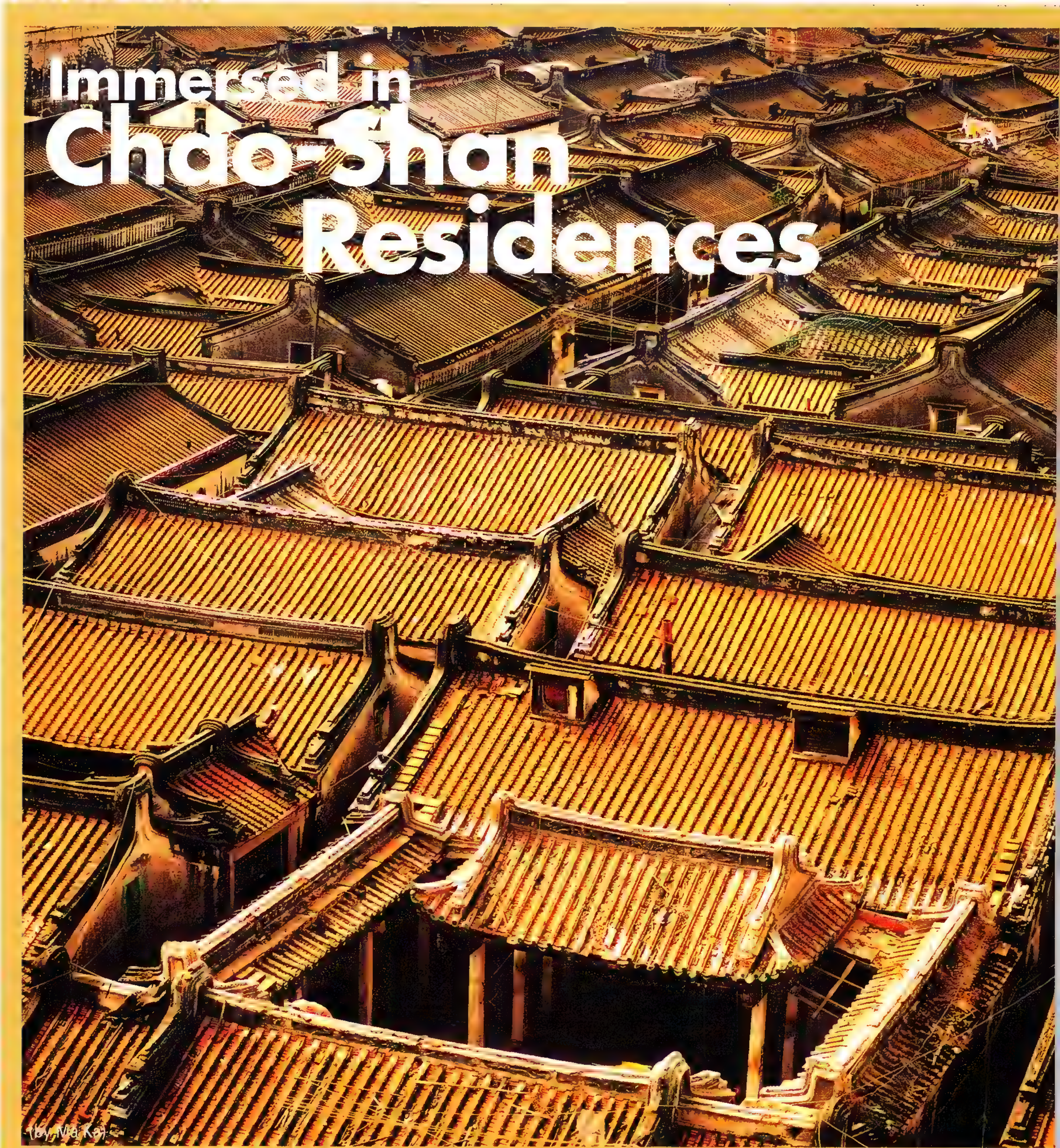
here one night in the rain; the lights seemed to multiply into thousands of little spots by the puddles on the ground. I could imagine many great literary works being inspired by this scene.

The square in the new part of Chaozhou is equally mesmerizing at night. A musical fountain display plays every evening; it is popular with the locals, who stroll here en masse after dinner, and also attracts young people from other cities. In hot weather, people even frolic around the jets of water, splashing each other, not caring about getting wet. On high days and public holidays, films are also shown in the square. It was windy the day I went, the picture wasn't clear, but the audience around me still cheered and clapped, for who really cares about the actual film? Everyone goes there for the fun.

This summer the prime minister of Thailand came to visit Chaozhou—not only is it twinned with Bangkok, but his own ancestors originally came from here and was so struck by the merry atmosphere in the square that he plans to build an exact same square in Bangkok.

When I left Chaozhou, my biggest regret was having missed the famous Xiangzhi Bridge. It is currently being renovated and scheduled to be completed next year. When that is done, I will definitely be back.

Immersed in Chao-Shan Residences



(by Ma Kai)

For a true appreciation of Chao-Shan customs, one must explore the region's homes. Such residences encompass a variety of styles, from the houses of simple local folk to those of the well-to-do, with nostalgia for the past and respect for their ancestors visible round every corner.

1. A local resident in the old village of Longhu carrying bamboo baskets to bring offerings for Chinese New Year (by Wong Chong Fai)
2. New Year decorations of a Chao-Shan household (by Wong Chong Fai)

100 Birds Facing the Phoenix

Also known as "Hundred Phoenixes Facing the Sun", this grand style combines two or more "Four-Point Gold" residences. Such a compound should contain at least 100 chambers. Shrines are usually built in this style to accommodate large public crowds wishing to pay tribute to their ancestors.

The Chaozhou "cuo" (shrine or temple) is rooted in palace architecture. As this Chaozhou saying implies, Chao-Shan architecture has its origins in the extravagant shrines of Central China, including Henan, Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces.

Chao-Shan people maintain a deep, sentimental reverence for the culture of Central China. During their long migratory history, they were never without the small wooden boards that represented their ancestors. Wherever they settled, the very first thing they did was to place these boards in a "cuo" to worship their forbears. The "cuo", therefore, is a kind of hometown for the soul, and a link to their geographical homeland.

Four Types of Residences

"Xia Shan Hu" (Tiger from the Hill) and "Si Dian Jin" (Four-Point Gold) constitute the two basic architectural styles of Chao-Shan buildings. The names give some inkling of the differences between the buildings: the former focuses on simplicity, the latter on glamour.

The small courtyard of the "Tiger from the Hill" style reflects the simple village life one would expect to find among farmers and other hard-working locals.

Even for a grand, wealthy household, the "Four-Point Gold" floor plan may not have been spacious enough. Therefore, some families joined together two or more "Four-Point Gold" structures to form a larger compound. The result produced two new styles of homes: "Bai Niao Chao Feng" (Hundred Birds Facing the Phoenix) and "Si Ma Tuo Che" (Four Horses Pulling a Cart). The names alone vividly conjure up the overwhelming supremacy of the buildings.

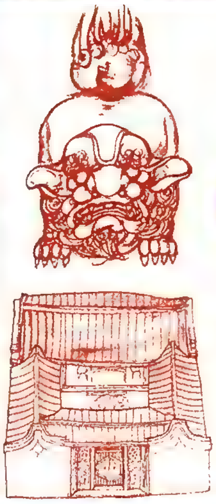
Can one still find such an interesting mix of residences? Surprisingly, existing structures are not confined to protected historic areas, for the Chao-Shanese do not pull down their old houses easily. A casual walk down any alley in an old village brings one directly in touch with the ubiquitous ancient houses. Seeing these homes in their "natural" state is far more rewarding than any specially created tourist zone.?

Grand House of Crossover Styles

One such area is Jiadi Alley situated in Chaozhou Old City, where the most authentic small residences have been preserved.

Each of the town's residences has its own interesting story, but that of Sir Chen Cihong is the most well known. At the age of 28, Chen, a wealthy Chaozhou merchant during the late Qing Dynasty, headed to Thailand alone to run Chen's Rice Store in 1870, later opening branches in Singapore and Vietnam. Like his fellow successful businessmen, after making his fortune, Chen returned to his hometown to build housing for his family. Construction officially began in 1910. Chen died 11 years later, but his offspring carried

Photo: Lin Kailong



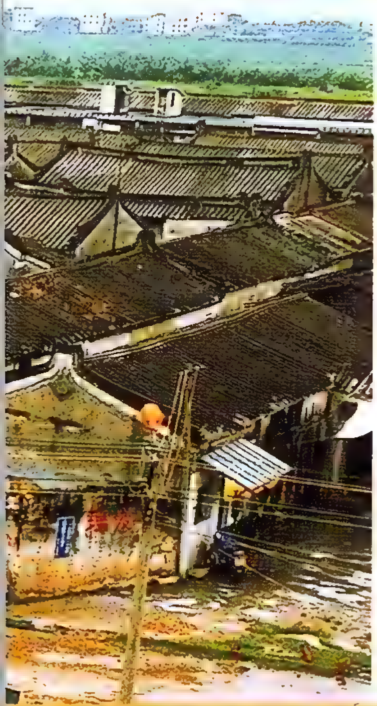
Tiger from the Hill

Also known as "Crawling Lion", this style features a building with a lower front and higher rear section. Composed of a living hall and two rooms, it resembles a tiger moving down a hill.

on building in accordance with his will. Not until the Japanese invaded Shantao in 1939 did construction come to a halt.

The Shanju (Cozy Residence) Chamber is an architectural masterpiece, while the family shrine at the complex's centre, Chuanye (Passing Leaves) Hall, follows the "Phoenix" style. Alongside it, four passageways and houses take the form of "Four Horses Pulling a Cart". This traditional Chao-Shan mansion is, in fact, a crossbred construction. The fa?ade is mainly Chao-Shan, but western-style window frames and floor tiles can be found throughout. The carvings on the walls, while obviously done in the artistic Chao-Shan style, depict fanciful landscapes and western beauties.

The entire compound took over three decades to build, yet no one has ever lived inside, for



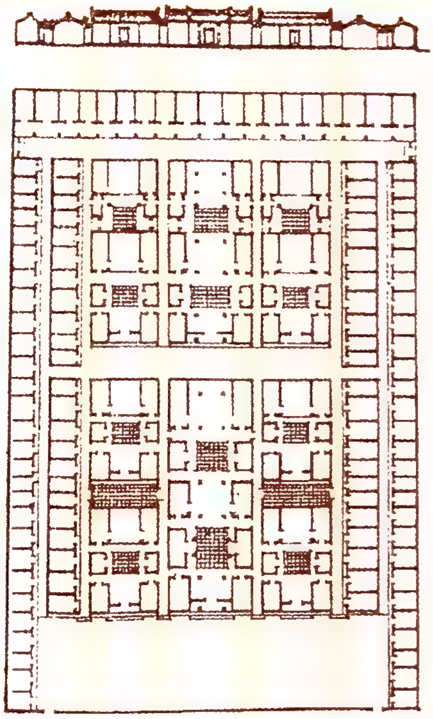


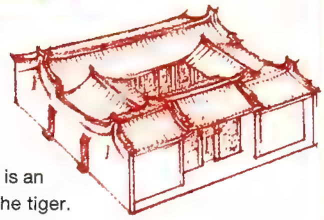
Photo: Lin Kailong

Four Horses Pulling Cart

Similar in structure to Hundred Phoenixes Facing the Sun, Four Horses Pulling a Cart distinguishes itself with a family shrine at the core, while two extra Four-Point Gold buildings are added either side of the shrine. Four corridors radiate from the centre to connect all five buildings together— hence, the "four horses". The word "cart" represents the central family shrine, suggesting that the ancestors are propelling the offspring forward. Some scholars compare the Four Horses Pulling a Cart to Tang Dynasty shrines mentioned in some Buddhist scriptures, citing structural similarities in both types of buildings. Over time, people began turning their homes into shrines. Some even combined a few residences to create a small temple on the same scale as Four Horses Pulling a Cart.

Photo: Lin Kailong

Four-Point Gold



This style is an extension of the tiger. A compound is added to the front of the building to create four inverted V-shaped roofs, which symbolize the Chinese character for gold. A bird's-eye view of the complex reveals an image of a gourd. Four-Point Gold also resembles a man with his arms stretched wide. The main chambers are the arms, while the palms scoop up the lower rooms.

Chen's descendents have long since settled in Hong Kong and Thailand. Wandering through the grand house, it is hard to believe that this 500-room mansion is now home to a few guards and the odd bit of flora or stray fauna.

Earthen Towers and Walled Villages

It is a natural phenomenon that once a number of buildings have been erected in the same place, a small town will then form to reinforce communal living and defensive purposes. As it happens, earthen buildings are not unique to western Fujian. Many earthen buildings and old settlements still exist in the Chao-Shan area.

Due to political turmoil during the Wei and Jin periods (265—420) scores of people from Central China moved south to Guangdong. Those who eventually settled in the flatlands are today's Chaozhou people. Others took the continental route, passing from Jiangxi to the western Fujian or eastern Guangdong provinces, and made their homes in the hilly areas. Today, they are known as the Hakka.

As there is little level land in the Yaoping and Chaoan region, settlers there opted to build three to four-storey houses. By contrast, the flat coastal region allowed space for horizontal development, leading to the rise of large-scale walled villages. Daoyun Tower in Yaoping and Longhu Ancient Village in Chao'an are two examples of these different building styles.

A Visit to Longhu Walled Village

The 1.5-square-kilometre village of Longhu (Dragon Lake) was gradually formed during the late Ming Dynasty, when more and more families clustered together to better defend themselves against Japanese pirates. Eventually, the ancient village became home to families of more than 50 different surnames. Situated at the estuary of Hanjiang River, Longhu had been a prosperous commercial town for centuries during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Only with the change of river channels in modern history did the town's fame begin to fade.

Before entering the village, our group climbed up a watchtower for an overview of the town. Three streets are laid out east of the main thoroughfare, with six alleys at the west gate. The place was more derelict than I expected. The buildings of greatest historical value are Scholars Hall, Longhu Academy and the Shrine of the Xu Family. They are also the oldest structures preserving the architectural style of the Song Dynasty. Yet, most architecture in the city reflects the Ming and Qing era. At the same time, however, the buildings are embellished with the folk art unique to Chao-Shan, including wood and

1. The tranquil old residence of Sir Chen Cihong is now a local museum (by Wong Chong Fai)
2. Local patrons busy with worshipping to ancestors in a shrine (by Wong Chong Fai)
3,4,5,6. Different roof design of "Four-Point Gold" residence
7. A model of the octagonal Daoyun Tower is kept by the villagers (by Wu Xizhou)

2

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(by Miranda Ma)

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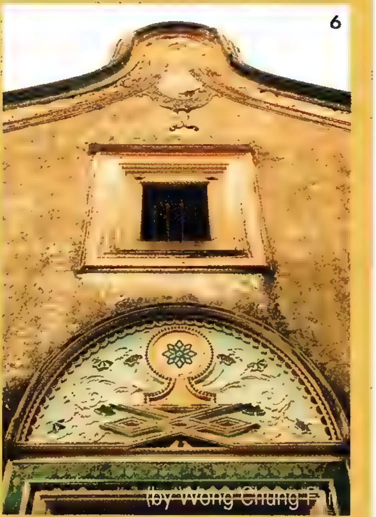
(by Wong Chung Fai)

5

(by Miranda Ma)



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(by Wong Chung F

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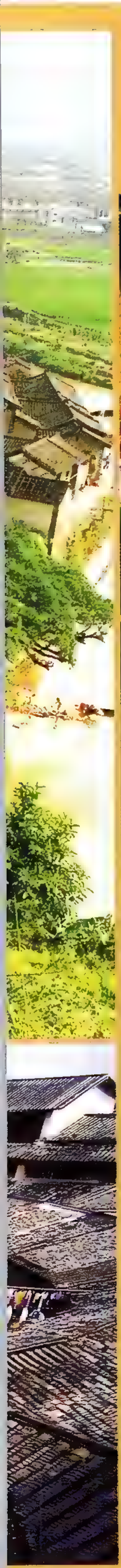


stone carvings, roof tiles, paintings and so forth.

Octagonal Daoyun Tower

Over 650 earthen Chao-Shan buildings cluster together in the Pingyao region, half of them by Chao-Shans and half by Hakkas. The largest eight-sided structure among it's type in China, the Daoyun building is also the region's most famous earthen building. A must-see for academics studying Chao-Shan buildings.

The emphasis the "Heluo" (area around Henan, Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces) people placed on ancestral worship is what makes the Daoyun building unique. The floor of the shrine, which is built at the core of the building, is lower at the front than at the rear, to indicate reverence and respect. Unlike most Hakka earthen buildings, which are characterized by one building shared by many households, Chao-Shan structures feature one household living in a single building. Such styles of construction are very similar to those of ancient Central China. Though its octagonal shape is markedly different from the other buildings within the walled city of Longhu, all of the structures have their roots in the same place. Just as importantly, each building held the dreams of the old Heluo people as well as the current Chao-Shanese the dream of owning one's home.

1. A typical earthen tower in Chao-Shan area (by Lin Kailong)
2. Overview of Daoyun Tower (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. There are 32 wells in Daoyun Tower (by Chan Yat Nin)
4. Every earthen tower is only built with one staircase (by Chan Yat Nin)

Lifelong Lyricism:
Chaozhou Opera

Bring along a chair and [illegible] if you follow audience members to experience Chaozhou opera as the locals do. And be sure to show the utmost respect for this [illegible] pastime, as the Chaozhou people have been enthusiastic about their musical heritage for generations.

3

4

1. A rapt audience watches a Chaozhou opera (by Deng Zongting)
2. Students in class at the Opera School (by Wong Chung Fai)
3. Burning joss sticks to wish for a successful show (by Wong Chung Fai)
4. A troupe heads to a Chaozhou village to perform (by Wong Chung Fai)

During Chinese New Year, Chaozhou operas fill the air in Chaozhou and Shantou. Temporary stages and crowds of spectators who bring their own seating crowd the entrances of every village.

Gongs and drums start the proceedings, followed by the strains of a "Yehu", or "coconut fiddle". The head of this two-stringed traditional Chinese musical instrument is made of a coconut, hence the name. The body, meanwhile, is covered in Chinese paulownia wood. The high tone of the yehu is one unique aspect of Chaozhou opera. Another is that the singing style of the actors and actresses and the music being played follow the same melody and rhythm, creating the lively and straightforward rhythm of Chaozhou opera. Since the Chaozhou dialect has eight tones, even speaking can feel like singing.

The clowns of Chaozhou opera are particularly outstanding performers. All have a foundation in martial arts, making their acrobatic feats extraordinarily eye-catching.

More Than an Entertainment

In comparison with Chuan opera, which is struggling for survival, Kun songs, which have become caviar to the general and the surviving Beijing operas, which rely on foreign tourists, Chaozhou opera is relatively lucky.

The age range of a Chaozhou opera audience is very wide, perhaps due to everyone present having heard and watched it since childhood. Chaozhou opera is not only a performance art, but also one of the region's indispensable folk activities. Chaozhou opera crews are employed to perform during festivities, offering sacrifices, all sorts of events, with players often employed to perform over several days.

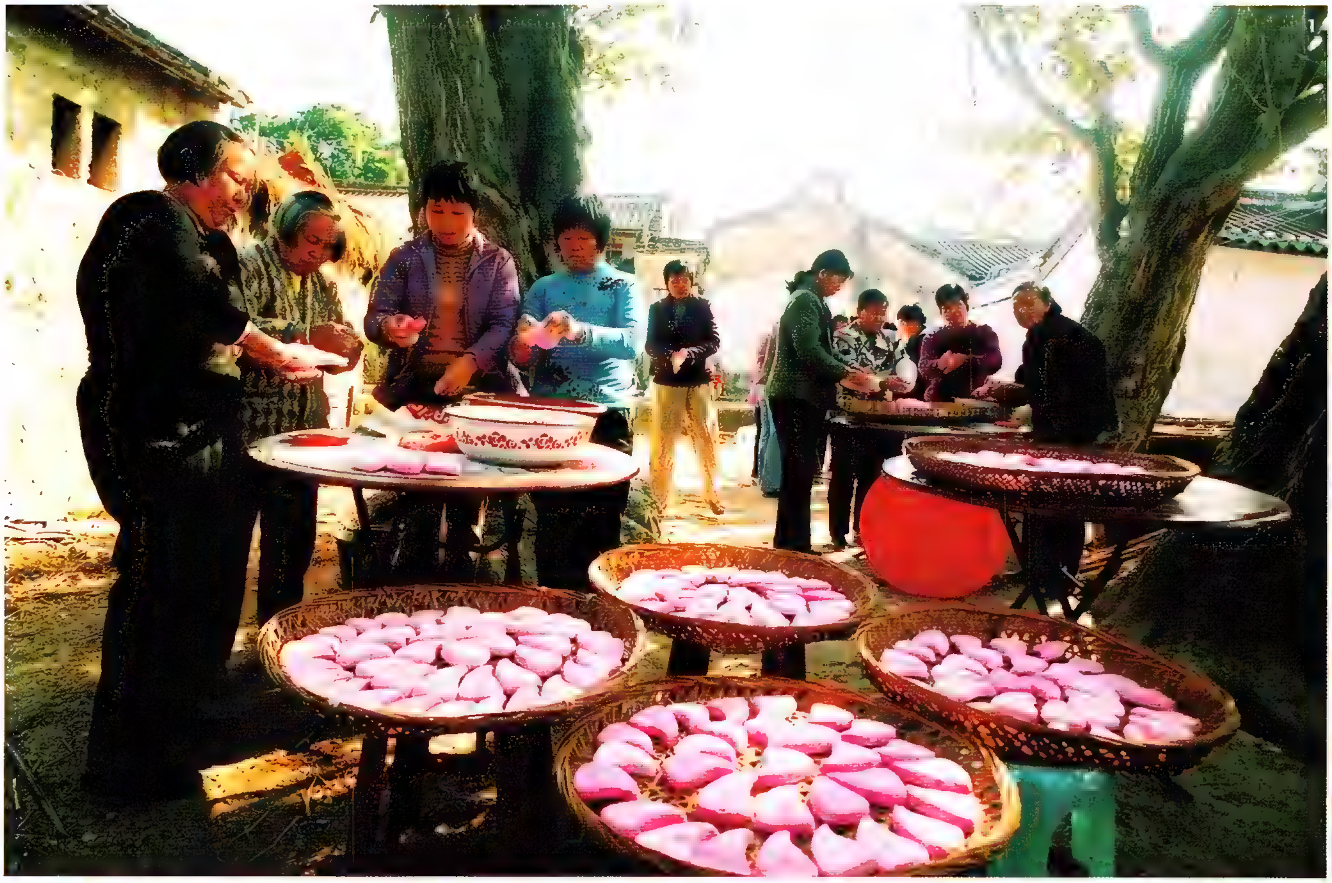
Development of Chaozhou Opera

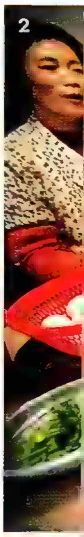
During the late Qing period, due to the deaths of Emperor Guangxu (1871—1908) and Empress Dowager Cixi (1835—1908), operas were banned nationwide for 200 days and many opera troupes were disbanded. At that time, many Chao-Shan people had already settled in Thailand, with several Chaozhou opera troupes following in their wake. As a result, Chaozhou opera troupes were not only able to tide the economic difficulties of not being able to perform at home, but they were also able to expand their art form overseas. Chaozhou opera took Thailand by storm and served to consol the Chaozhou people living there.

Chaozhou opera was the first to abolish the practice of using children actors. In the past, poor families would sell their children into the country's opera troupes. The youngsters started training at the age of seven or eight, and performed on stage at 12. Actresses did not take part in the traditional operas; instead, young boys whose voices had not yet changed played the female roles. However, the children sold to opera troupes were often treated inhumanely. Many children committed suicide before they ever performed for an audience.

Today, children are sent to Chaozhou opera schools for training after they have finished their early secondary school education. They learn the basic skills first. Then, based on the performance style and ability of each individual, they are appointed to different roles.

Now, Chaozhou Opera has been regarded as Chaozhou people's musical heritage for generations.





Chaozhou Food

There must be a reason why the food of Chaozhou is as popular in Hong Kong and among expatriate Chinese as the cuisines of Guangdong, Sichuan, or Beijing. Whether served up by luxury hotels or street vendors, these special dishes capture and entice with a flavour all their own.

One of the distinctive features of Chaozhou cuisine is the art of turning common, everyday foods into delicacies. Through careful preparation, even the simplest rice and vegetables can be transformed into homemade gourmet treats.

All Ordinary Ingredients

Porridge is pronounced "Mei" in Chaozhou dialect. Congee (rice porridge) evolved as an economical dish. Because soft porridge is also gentle on one's stomach and nourishes vitality, congee is also considered good for the health. Pickles, a highly regarded food since ancient times, are indispensable when eating congee. Back in the Qing Dynasty, porridge with pickles was the mainstay of the Chaoshan diet.

Seafood is also prevalent in Chaozhou cuisine. Seasoning is not usually added to such dishes as

1. Female villagers are busy making cakes for a festival (by Ma Ka)
2. Want to taste an authentic stir-fried oyster pastry? (by Wong Chung Fai)
3. Marinated pig's ear (by Wong Chung Fai)

4. Making beef balls (by Ma Ka)
5. Bird's nest and shark's fin (by Wong Chung Fai)
6. Stewed marinated goose is a popular at (by Wong Chung Fai)

iced crab or iced fish. But the locals may opt for a bit of bean sauce known as Puning.

Other foods, including deep-fried bean curd, which is crunchy outside but soft inside, marinated soy sauce goose with its appetizing aroma, chewy fish balls and beef balls, as well as spring vegetables, are all made from area farm products. Locals dine at "Dai Pai Dongs", wiping away their sweat while eating at the low tables that spill out into the streets. Perspiring chefs stirring their minced beef with two iron sticks to make beef balls are a common sight on the pavement. During festive celebrations, especially in the suburbs, women often gather together publicly to make buns and steam puddings. The puddings come in a wide variety of shapes and flavours; they are the favourite "dim sum" of the Chaoshan people.

Pursuit of Class

Sauces and seasonings are the most striking feature of Chaozhou cuisine. Though often cast in a supporting role, they are essential to every dish. Bean sauce, fish sauce, mandarin oil, sesame oil, Sha Cha sauce (also known as Chinese satay or barbecue sauce), garlic and hand-torn Chinese green onions are just a few of the possibilities. At least one kind of sauce or seasoning is matched with each dish, creating thousands of potential variations.

Bird's nests and shark's fins appear on Chaozhou menus, too, as introduced by overseas Chinese in Thailand. The precious ingredients used in Chaozhou cuisine reflect a blend of the area's geographical conditions and eating habits of the people. For this reason, many aficionados regard it as more refined than other cuisines that pursue innovation for its own sake.

Eating means many things to many people: some eat just to fill their stomachs; others enjoy savouring flavours; still others place great importance on their surroundings at a meal. Those seeking enjoyment and extravagance will love Chaozhou cuisine, while those who prefer light plain meals will also be pleased.

Scenic Spots of Chaozhou and Shantou

Most spots listed below can be reached by taking a tricycle or walking for some minutes. For more travel information of Chaozhou and Shantou, please refer to our past issue No. 259. (Feature Story: Hometowns Revisited-Chaozhou & Shantou)

[illegible]

Rock Cannon Park 石炮台公園

During 13th reign of Qing Emperor Tongzhi (1874), the Qing government bought two cannons from Britain to defend the coastal area of Shantou. The area is now a heritage site and park for the public.

Haibin Road Square 海濱路廣場

Best place for a leisure stroll. Locals come here every day to watch Chaozhou opera, practise Tai Chi or dance, or just taste Kung Fu tea.

Lao Ma Palace 老媽宮

"Lao Ma" (old mother) refers to Tin Hau, or Goddess of the Sea. The stone relief and colourful wooden carvings on the beams are of high aesthetic value. It was built during the Qing Emperor Jiaqing's reign (1796—1820). Beside the palace is Guan Di Temple.

Xiao Gong Yuan (Little Park) 小公園

Intersection point of five streets, Xiao Gong Yuan is not a park but the oldest district of Shantou which boosts lots of western architecture, somehow like old Hong Kong. It is now under renovation, thus many historic buildings have been dismantled.

Yushi Scenic Resorts 礐石風景名勝區

Located south of Shantou Harbour, it has six scenic areas which feature sea view, hills, rocks, and mountain caves. It can be reached by taking a ferry from Haibin Road.

Old Residence of Chen Cihong 陳慈黌故居

Regarded as "top residence of overseas Chinese in Lingnan area (Guangdong and Guangxi)", the house was built in traditional Chaozhou style, combined with western flavours. It owns 506 chambers covering 2.54 sq m. Transport: Can be reached by special route bus No. 103.

Museum of Cultural Revolution 文革博物館

Located in Tashan Hill Scenic Area in the Chenghai District, it is the first one in China to theme on Cultural Revolution (1966—1977). It showcases plenty of historical photos and documents of the incident. Transport: Can be reached by Bus 18 or 103. It costs less than 30 yuan by taking a taxi, and is much faster.

Chaozhou 潮州

Kaiyuan Temple 開元寺

One of the 10 Buddhist temples appointed to be built by Tang Emperor Xuanzong in 743. The temple has undergone more than 10 renovations.

Chaozhou West Lake Park 潮州西湖公園

The lake was a stream of Hanjiang River in Tang Dynasty, but was separated during the collapse of a river dam. It is small yet exquisite, and is famous among the locals.

Changli Old Office 昌黎舊治坊

Located in front of Yu Xue Gong (Confucius Learning Palace) in Haiyang County, it was built in Ming Dynasty in the memory of Tang scholar Han Yu (768—824)'s management on Chaozhou. "Changli" is another family name for Han Yu.

Yilue Master Huang's Shrine 已略黃公祠

Established during the Qing Dynasty, it is now used as a government office. Visitors can appreciate wooden carvings of Chaozhou taste, as well as the Hanjiang River faraway.

Hanwengong (Han Yu)'s Shrine 韓文公祠

Built in memory of Tang scholar Han Yu, it is situated on Bijia Mountain at the east coast of Hanjiang River. The Shrine stores over 500 pieces of Chinese calligraphy and a bust of the scholar. An oak in front of the Shrine was said planted by Han Yu, hence a famous sight.

Kaiyuan Temple

Tchan Fou-li Photography Gallery 陳復禮攝影藝術館

Located in the Hanshan Normal University where Tchan graduated, the gallery showcases lots of Tchan's photography works, as well as his personally inscriptions. Transport: Better to grab a cab.

Danfu Hall 淡浮院

Located on Yanfeng Mountain, it is a museum built by Thailand-born Chinese Guo Fengyuan in the purpose to spread Chinese culture. The Hall boosts calligraphy steles from the past, relics from the Qing Dynasty, and Thailand Buddhist statues. Transport: Buses can be found from Chaozhou Fengxi (Maple Stream), Chaozhou Guesthouse, or Chaozhou Bridge.

[illegible] Gallery

Travel Tips

Transport

Flight

Shantou airport is 12 km northeast of Shantou city. There are 27 domestic routes and five international routes (Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Gujin, Hong Kong) available. But Hong Kong tourists are recommended to take buses to Chao-Shan instead of flying to there. There is no airport in Chanzhou.

Bus

Buses are available every 15 minutes from Shenzhen's Lo Wu Bus Terminal to Chaozhou and Shantou. Fare: 150 yuan; Duration: 5 hours. There are also cross-boundary scheduled buses from Hong Kong to Chao-Shan. Duration: about 6 hours.

Train

Trains depart from Shenzhen, eastern Maoming, Wuchang, Jiujiang to Shantou as terminus, passing Chaozhou. The Shenzhen train departs at night and arrive in the next morning.

City Transport

Chauzhou

Flag-down price of taxi is 8 yuan, and the price increases after 3 km. The sights of Chaozhou are concentrated in the area of ancient city district. You can easily charter a tricycle to the sights within the district, which costs about 20 yuan. There are only a few scheduled buses.

Shantou

Taxi's rate is the same as Chauzhou's. Taking tricycle in Shantou downtown is cheaper than taxi (no more than 8 yuan), but do remember bargain for the price.

Between two cities:

There are regular buses between Chaozhou and Shantou. But taking a taxi is more efficient, which is about 45 minutes and 50 yuan.

Hotels

Shantou

Regency Hotel	Jinsha Donglu	(754) 819 9888
Golden Gulf Hotel	96, Jinha Donglu	(754) 826 3262
International Hotel	Jinsha Donglu	(754) 825 1212

Chaozhou

White Magnolia Hotel	Chaozhou Dadao	(768) 286 3388
Chaozhou Guest Hotel	Chafeng Lu	(768) 239 9888
Chaozhou Hotel	Chaofeng Lu	(768) 226 1168

Specialties

1. Drawnwork

Originated in western countries, drawn work skills were introduced to China in late Qing Dynasty. The Chaozhou drawn work has applied western technology into Chinese embroidery.

Chaozhou Drawnwork Company
Add: 106 Huancheng Xilu, Chaozhou

2. Preserved fruits and vegetables.

Chaozhou Special Produce Centre
Add: Beside Harbour Bureau, end of Xirong Lu, Chaozhou
Da Yang Guang (Huge Sun)
Add of head store: 27 Shengping Lu, Shantou
Division store: 40 Changping Lu, Shantou

3. Pottery & Porcelain

Chaozhou is well-known for its pottery and porcelain wares, especially Kung Fu tea set and small decorating items.

Shops: Porcelain Exhibition Hall
Chaozhou Fengxi Pottery and Porcelain Exhibition Hall

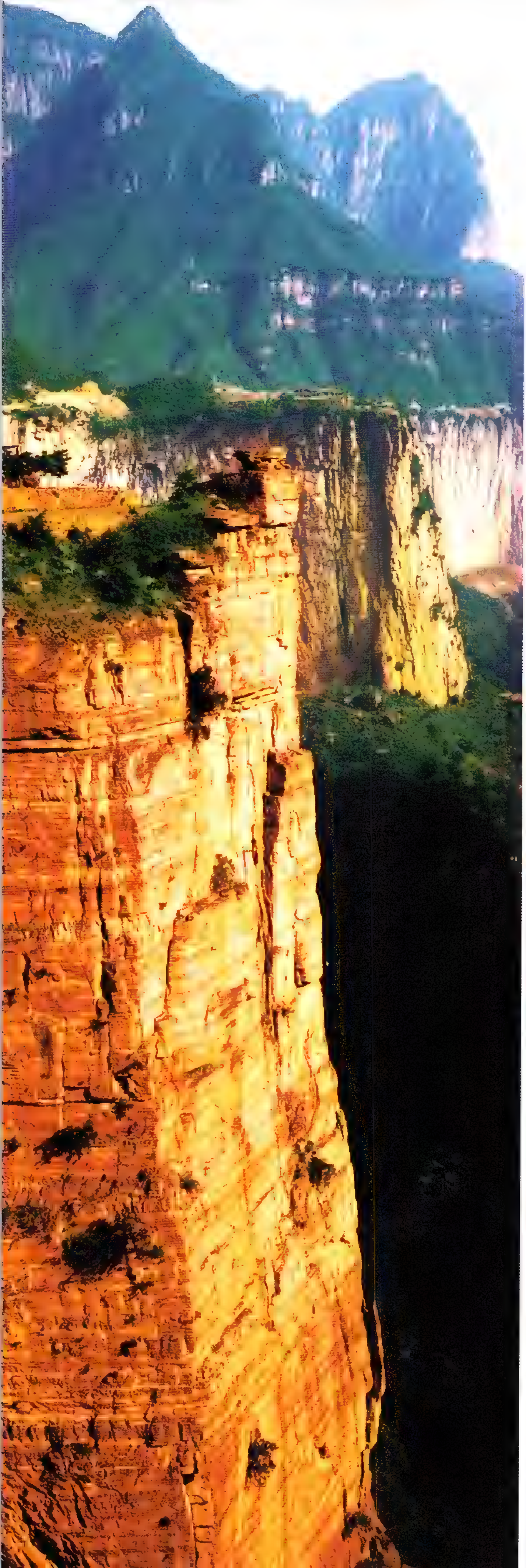
Stunning Wangmangling Peak

Photos by Qin Hongyu

Mount Taihang extends across Hebei, Shanxi and Henan provinces for over 400 km and is an important mountain range and natural boundary in the topography of northern China.

Rarely do tourists know about Wangmangling Peak, a wonderful place perfect for scenic photography on Mt. Taihang, thus giving the peak an unbeatable natural aura. The Wangmangling Peak range lies in Lingchuan County in the south-eastern part of Shanxi Province neighbouring onto Henan Province. Comprising over 50 peaks of different heights, the range extends for 40.6 sq km reaching a height of 1,665 metres above sea level.

Whenever there is rain snow, the vast plain facing to the eastern side of Wangmangling Peak will be covered in a sea of clouds in the next morning, creating a breath-taking scenery for photo-shooting.



(Left) The cliffs at the foot of Wangmangling Peak.
(Top right) Thanks to the difficulty to access the place, Baodugou Gully is well preserved with natural ecosystem as well as animal species.
(Bottom right) Two layers of mist appear in Dong Xiao Tai as if a pair of wings of a fairy.

Photography Tips

Wangmangling Peak

The best times for photography are in the morning and evening. The best place is Dong Shao Tai (East Frontier Guard Post) from which the open plains of northern China can be seen. (Transport: One bus daily leaves at 1 p.m. from the Lingchuan county seat)

Grand Canyon at Mount Fozi

This 20-km canyon is east of Lingchuan. The canyon features lush mountains and streams all along its breadth with mountains stretching as far as the eye can see.

Mount Jizi (I-go)

Located 20 km southeast of the county seat, Mt. Jizi encompasses 20 sq km in area and reaches 1,790 metres above sea level. Historians have proved that the mountain is the place where the game of "I go" originated. Black, white and yellow river pebbles are just one feature of the area's unusual geological construction and the whisper of the mountain winds through the pine trees is also famous. In spring, the area is blessed with wild flowers.In winter, snow landscapes are equally fine, with icicles hanging off snow-sprinkled trees making an especially attractive sight. (Transport: Take the bus to Wangmangling Peak and get off at the entrance to Mount Jizi. Then change bus there for another 25km.)

Xiyagou Gully

Located at the southern tip of Wangmangling Peak, this 1,000-metre-deep gully offers ideal photography conditions only during the daytime. The bottom of the gully feels very much like the scenery found in the river towns of southern China. However, please take caution when photographing in the gully — one wrong foot and you could end up at the bottom of the gully! (Transport: Bus are available from county seat)

Baodugou Gully

This area of the scenic park is the most well-preserved due to its lack of paved roads. The highlight of the gully is the magnificent Qixingtan (Seven Stars Pond) Waterfall. (Transport: Take the bus from Wangmangling to Mawuzai, then walk there for 5 hours)

Lemaya Cliff

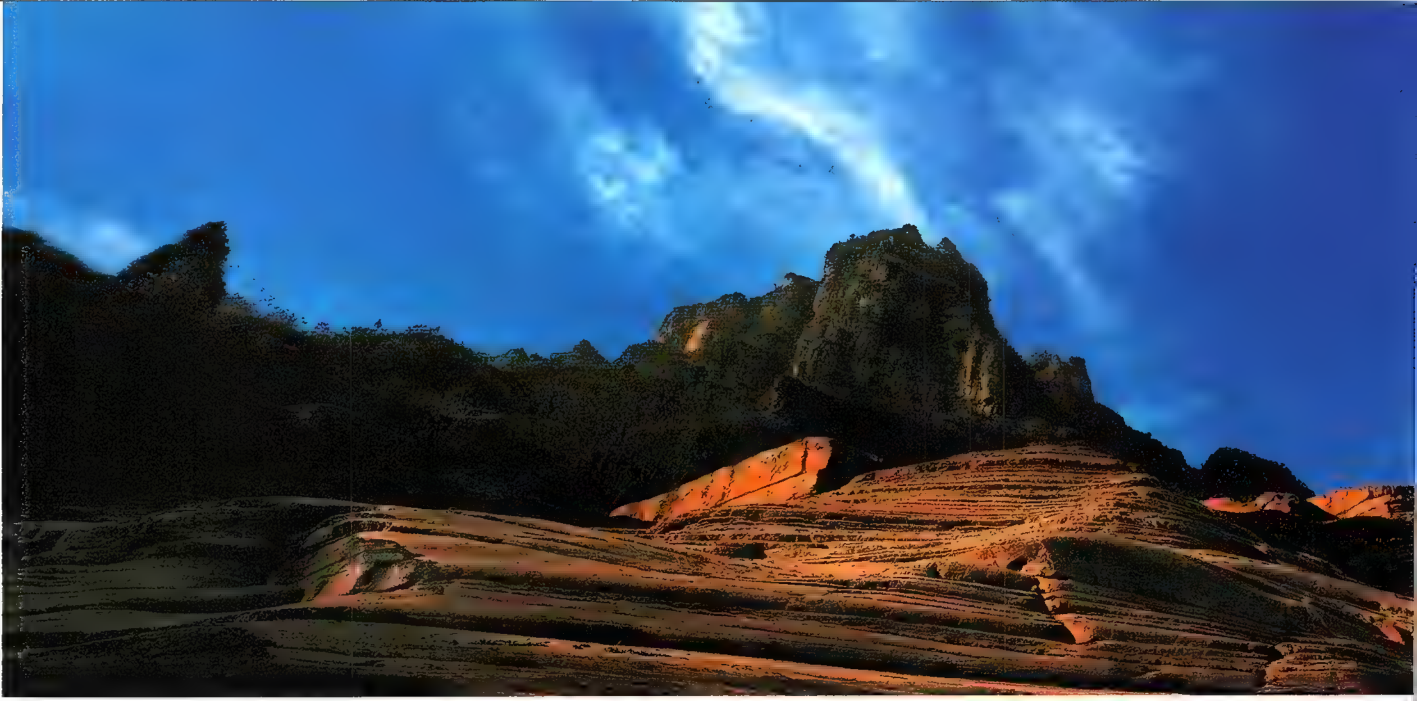
Located at Wangmangling scenic spot, the mountain peaks pile up on each other and hardy pine trees cover the harsh mountain sides. When the "sea of clouds" appears, there is no better place to witness its beauty.

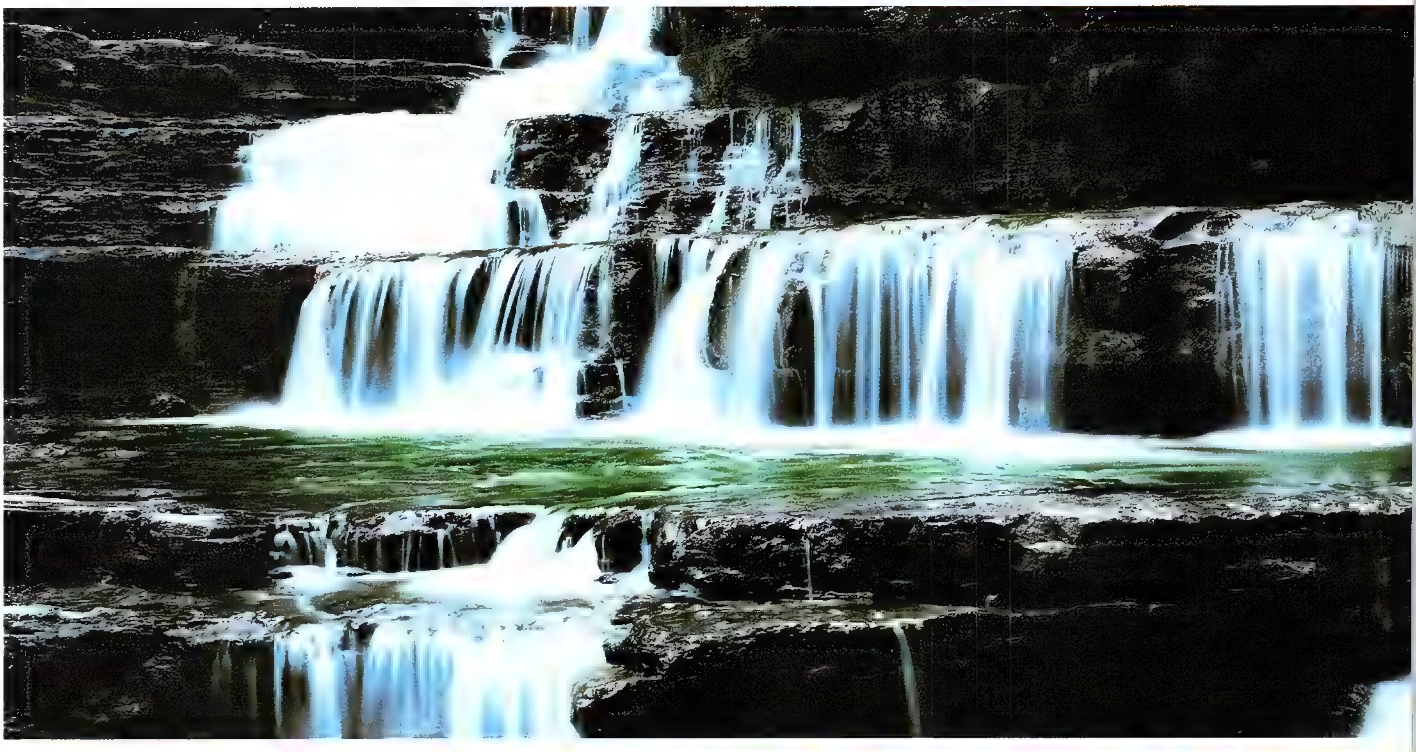
Huangwei

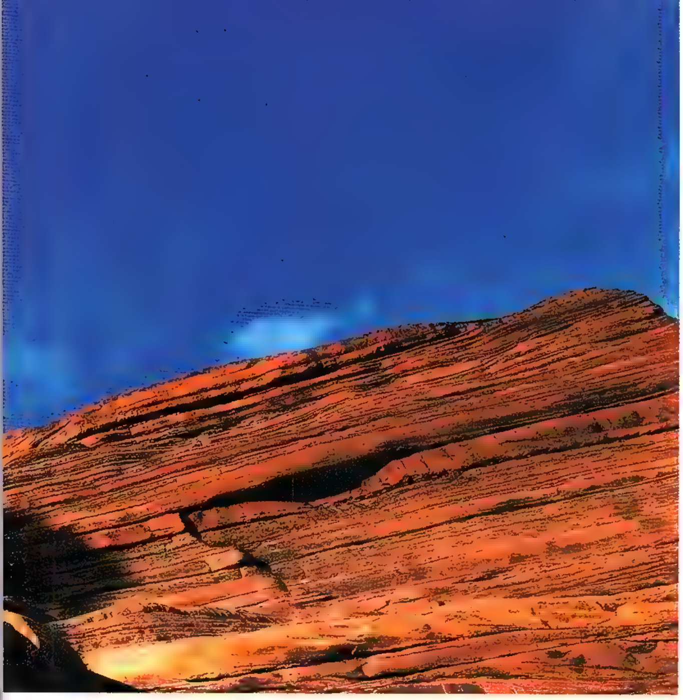
In particular, the Hongdou (Red Bean) Mountain Canyon stands out for its photographic value. In autumn, the scenery of red leaves turns the mountainside into a blaze of colour. The best time to visit is later Sep. or early Oct. (Transport: Take the bus to Hongshuii from the county seat and walk there about 3 km)

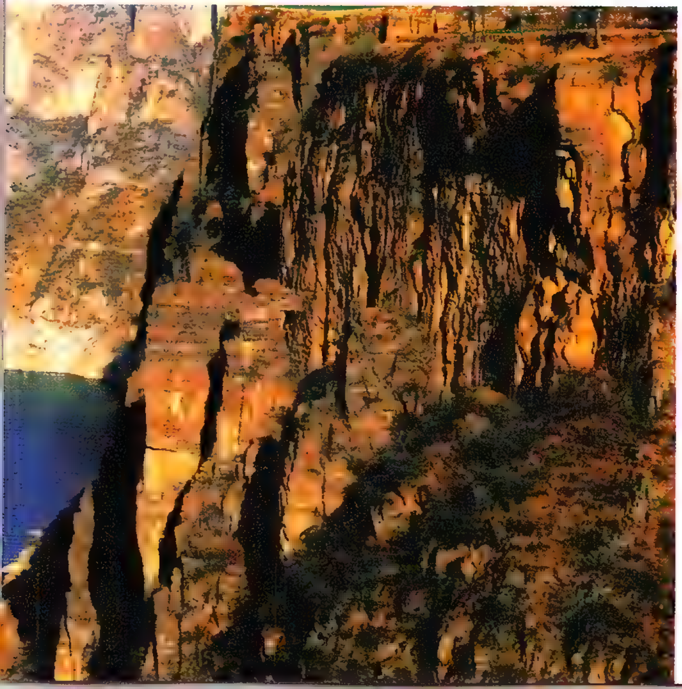
An arch of rainbow over Fu Qin Tai, one of the many scenic spots on Wangmangling Peak

[illegible] becomes an "ice palace"









Travel Tips

Transport: To get to Lingchuan, travel by train to Changzhi or Jincheng and then change to a bus to Lingchuan county seat. From there, buses are available to Wangmangling Peak and other sites.

Accommodation: **On the Mountain** Basic accommodation is available on the mountain for 20~30 yuan

Jincheng

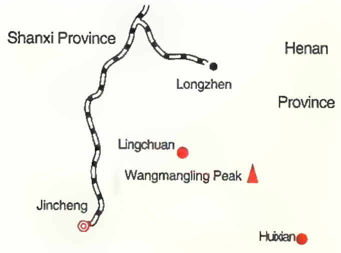
Jincheng Hotel	59 Qianxijie.	Tel: (0356) 303 2298
Gaodu Hotel	Xinshi Dongjie	Tel: (0356) 202 4220
Yangguang Hotel	Zezhoulu	Tel: (0356) 203 8988
Xinshiji Dasha	Jianshe Nanlu	Tel: (0356) 203 2150

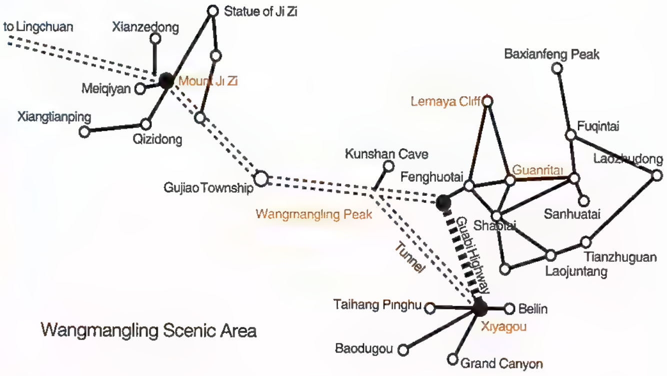
Weather: The best time to travel is from April to October.

Clothing: Even in spring or autumn, it is advisable to pack warm jumpers and rainproof outerwear.

Attention: Some places of interest are located far from accommodation and will require camping out in order to catch the early and late light hours. It is advisable to take a tent and an umbrella in such cases.

Scenic Area Management Office: (356) 620 1844/688 0166


Shanxi Province
Henan
Province
Longzhen
Lingchuan
Wangmangling Peak
Jincheng
Huixian


to Lingchuan
Xianzedong
Statue of Ji Zi
Mount Ji Zi
Meiqiyan
Xiangtianping
Qizidong
Gujiao Township
Kunshan Cave
Fenghuotai
Wangmangling Peak
Tunnel
Guabi Highway
Lemaya Cliff
Baxianfeng Peak
Fuqintai
Laozhudong
Guanritai
Sanhuatai
Shabtai
Tianzhuguan
Laojuntang
Taihang Pinghu
Beilin
Xiyagou
Baodugou
Grand Canyon
Wangmangling Scenic Area

(Top) The time-worn rock layers has proved Wangmangling Peak as the most strategic location on the rift between the Loess Plateau in Shanxi and Zhongzhou Plain in Henan.

(Middle) The Seven Stars Pond Waterfall located at the bottom of Baodugou Gully.

(Bottom) Spectacular sight over the Grand Canyon at Mount Fozi.

While Beijing's Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven and Summer Palace impress the visitor with their royal air, shopping malls provide a glimpse of the modern side of this imperial city.

The Golden Resources Shopping Mall is said to be the largest mall in the world, while the Xiushui Street Market evolved from the world famous thoroughfare for which it is named.

Super-sized Malls

1. Golden Resources is now the biggest mall in the world
2. Tasty delicacies and a dance performance take dining to new heights
3. Where is everybody? Even with 20,000 people shopping inside, the mega mall can feel deserted
4. Elaborate restaurant decor
5. Feast your eyes on the endless scenery both inside and outside the shops

Shop-crawling in "China's Mall"

Photos by Li Youxiang   Article by Li Yiya

The world's former largest shopping mall, West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, Canada, which occupies 480,000 square metres filled with nearly 800 shops, has been overtaken by the 680,000-square-metre mega Golden Resources Shopping Mall in Beijing. Even the most dedicated shopper will need more than a week to take it all in. Some claim that 100,000 people would still fail to crowd the place. The first time I entered the mall it took me 30 minutes to walk from the east end to the west. Now I know that the mall is not for walking; it's for sampling.

Catering to Every Kind of Shopper

Every shop in Golden Resources is a world unto itself. This ultra-mall entertains every big shot or small potato in a stately manner. You can go in with no intention of

in Beijing

buying anything and come out again without having made a purchase. The giant Lotus Supermarket resembles a mega warehouse that supplies every single kind of household item. Easyhome, which sells kitchen cupboards, is one floor above. The choices are endless. Having traversed the Cultural and Recreational Square of the Paper Tiger, the proud and the wealthy rest their tired toes at the Di Wu Dao Tavern for afternoon tea. Students buying books from the Paper Tiger sidle up to the bookshop cafe, order a pot of mild tea for RMB10~20 and sit back to study in comfort.

Pursuit of Decor and Delicious Food

Jin Shan Cheng Hotpot is one of Beijing's most renowned Chongqing hotpot brands. The rainspouts inside the restaurant are apparently an ancient Chinese architectural feature meant to catch raindrops (a metaphor for "making a profit"). A grey parapet runs down the middle of the shop, the colour bearing the mien of this imperial city. Serving a twist of delicate Suzhou cuisine or the simple Chongqing-style hotpot of the past, the shop also asserts its personality through its dishes.

At the westernmost side of the mall is Jiang Zai Ya (Ginger Duck). As you step into the glamorous yellow-hued interior, you are given a cleansing towel and ushered to your table. By the next time you sit down, your server will know your name and your favourite dishes. Apart from the signature dish of Ginger Duck, which is prepared in 88 steps, the restaurant mostly serves high-end Guangdong cuisine, with some Henan dishes as a special treat and even old-fashioned Shandong snacks. Every dish is a feast for the eyes and the taste buds.

Options for Casual Diners

If you don't fancy putting on aristocratic airs, go to Jin Yan Wen Hua (Golden Swallow) Restaurant on the fourth floor, where you can pamper yourself like a child by eating and playing at the same time. For RMB68, rip open their big gate crabs and dig in, washing them down with a graceful performance by singers and dancers dressed in Qin-Han dynasty costume. Want more action? Daredevil ladies will perform fire-eating and sword-swallowing tricks. From fragrant tea to the buffet, reading, surfing the Internet or playing cards, the whole family will find something fun to do in this 3,000 square-metre restaurant.

Even the food court is as lofty as a grand hall. Sample a wide variety of regional snacks without feeling cramped or worrying about the availability of seats. True to the modest yet profound nature of Chinese mansions, the area's inconspicuous facade gives you no hint of the sheer size of the food court within.

Address: 1 Yuanda Road, Haidian District, Beijing
Transport: 355, 996, 809, 619, 851, Yuntong 101, Yuntong 114 and others (Yuandadong Station or Landianchang)

秀水街
Reasonable price
International quality
实在价格
国际品质
Grand Opening
弘扬文化
提升品牌
1

Old and New Xiushui Street

Photos & article by Mickey Ching

The Xiushui Street of yesterday was a short alley with hundreds of stalls offering clothing, silk goods, leather bags and more. Its vendors did a rip-roaring business. Today, after roughly 26 years, Xiushui Street has been moved into a brand-new shopping block, but I can't help feeling nostalgic for its former atmosphere.

Transformed to a Towering Shopping Block

The new Xiushui Street Market can be accessed directly from the adjoining subway station. The contrast between the tall, grey shopping block and the bustling alley of the past couldn't be greater. Replaced by a 28,000 square-metre block of around 1,500 stalls, the old street's shoddy corrugated iron structures are now history. Today, the shops are uniformly decorated with patterns etched in dark red and manned by uniformed staff. The cataloguing of goods is distinct with leather bags, shoes and hats on the ground floor, casual wear on the first and second floors, knitwear and silk on the third, and gems, arts and crafts on the fourth. There are also cafes and fast-food restaurants. It has all the trappings of a typical shopping mall: bright lighting, escalators and customer service counters.

Missing the Bargaining

However, it was the human interaction of Xiushui Street that I relished. A shopper could get away with being ruthless and shameless. You could offer RMB50 for an item priced at RMB500 and not be laughed at. I loved listening to the haggling between locals and foreigners with limited linguistic resources. In buying some silk and velvet kung-fu attire once, originally priced at RMB250, for a mere RMB20, I was reminded of the saying, "there's nothing beyond your purchasing power in Xiushui Street; only the limits of your imagination". The everyday, familiar bargaining of the old Xiushui Street was exhilarating. Nowadays, such special shopping experiences are few and far between. The new Xiushui Market is poured out of a mould. I feel nostalgic for the crowdedness of bygone Xiushui Street.

1. **Xiushui Street has changed from the commercial street of yesterday to the shopping block of today**
2. **Examining silk in a spacious shop**
3. **A wide array of jewellery to choose from on the fourth floor**
4. **RMB20 for some kung-fu attire. Is it worth it?**

Address: East Xiushui Street, Chaoyang District, Beijing
Transport: Yong'anli Subway Station

Home of the Tai Chi Fist

Photos & article by Wang Xijin

According to Chinese novels, the creator of Taiji was Zhang Sanfeng of the Wudang (martial arts) School. History, however, tells a different story. Taiji was actually created by Chen Wangting. The ancient exercise was later taught to outsider Yang Luchan. A visit to the birthplace of the Tai Chi Fist — Chenjiagou of Wenxian County, Jiaozuo City in Central China's Henan Province — affords a closer look at how Tai Chi Fist developed over the centuries.

1. A bust of Chen Wangting, creator of Tai Chi
2. Tai Chi students practise together

The Chens Ancestral Shrine in Chenjiagou houses a bust of Chen Wangting, the founder of Taijiquan (Tai Chi fist or boxing), and a memorial tablet recounting Chen's life, as well as the story behind the birth of Tai Chi fist. Long galleries fan out on either side, containing more tablets honouring the most famous names in Tai Chi through the generations and the lives of the grand masters. In the main chamber of the ancestral shrine, a genealogical table and evolutionary chart of Tai Chi hangs on the main wall.

Chen Wangting: Founder of Tai Chi Fist

During the reign of Ming Emperor Chongzhen, Chen Wangting participated in the public exam for martial arts. Demonstrating exceptional skills in archery, he not only hit the target with his arrow, but also shot that arrow out with another arrow. The crowd on hand cheered his impressive performance. However, he failed the exam because the supervising official had been bribed. Charging on horseback, Chen slew the official with his sword and fled. He led the life of a wanderer from then on.

From the end of the Ming Dynasty to the reign of Emperor Shunzhi of the Dynasty, the disillusioned and disgruntled Chen Wangting cloistered himself in the mountains and rivers. He began to study folk martial arts.Eventually, he devised a form of martial arts which he thought was suitable for people of all ages. Chen Wangting called his form of martial arts Taijiquan.

Yang Luchan: Taiji's Outsider

Another interesting museum in Chenjiagou memorialises Yang Luchan's studies of Taijiquan. The building, an eastern

1. The spot where Yang Luchan spied on Chen Changxing teaching Tai Chi
2. Children learn Tai Chi in front of Chens Ancestral Shrine
3. Mausoleum of the grand masters and famous names in Chens Tai Chi fist

3

siheyuan (quadrangle), has two entrances. Chen's Taijiquan was not supposed to be passed down to female family members, let alone people from outside the Chen family. Yang was the first outsider to take up Taiji. His master was Chen Changxing.

Yang Luchan (1799—1872), born in Guangpingfu of Hebei (today's Yongnian county, Handan City, Hebei), was fond of martial arts from an early age. He worked at the local Chinese medicine shop, "Tai He Tang", which was owned by Chen Dehu of Chenjiagou. Yang's diligence prompted Chen to send him to work in Chenjiagou. Meanwhile, Chen Changxing was teaching Taiji at Chen Dehu's place. Yang desperately wanted to learn as well, but he was aware of the rule against teaching outsiders. He could only observe from the sidelines while the Chens practised. He learnt the moves by heart, practising on the sly, and became proficient. Chen discovered him and was impressed with the Yang's talent. Rather than punish the boy, Chen boldly discarded familial bigotry and let Yang formally practise Tai Chi fist in his spare time. From then on, Yang was Chen Changxing's disciple.

Yang had simplified the moves to make them softer, easier and more suitable for those wearing long frocks and plaits. They were also excellent for keeping fit. Yang's offspring continued to adapt and restyle the moves, resulting in the formation of "Yang's Tai Chi fist".

Yang's Tai Chi fist was already widely practised in Beijing and Tianjing when Tai Chi fist in Chenjiagou was still kept within the bounds of the family name "Chen". Little wonder that Yang Jizi, a martial arts poet of the time, penned the line, "Who would have expected Chen's Tai Chi fist of northern Henan to depend on the Yangs of southern Hebei to spread their art?"

Chen Zhaopei: Contemporary Master

In the 1960s, Taiji was passed down to the eleventh generation, to Chen Zhaopei, an important name in modern Tai Chi. Chen Zhaopei was a professor and committee member for many martial arts associations in the country as well as author of several books on Tai Chi principles and practice methods.

Nowadays, Chenjiagou is a mecca for Tai Chi practitioners. Every day, scores of people visit for the sole purpose of learning Tai Chi, which is not only well loved among the Chinese, but has also become a trend among health-conscious Westerners. Some of Chen's Tai Chi teachers also work abroad, spreading the exercise, so deeply embedded in rich cultural foundations, to every corner of the world.

4. The front gate of Chens Ancestral Shrine
5. Many foreigners travel to Chenjiagou to study Tai Chi

Information on Taiji Classes:

Chenjiagou Taijiquan School
Address: Chenjiagou, Zhao Bao Zhen, Wenxian County, Jiaozuo City, Henan Province
Tel: (391) 641 6456
Short-term courses (1 month or shorter)
Tuition: US$10~12/hour
Room and board: US$5~10/day
Mid-length courses (2~10 months)
Tuition: US$600/month
Classes: 6 hours per day, 6 days per week
Room and board: US$100~300/month
Long-term courses (1 year or longer)
Tuition: US$6,000/year
Classes: 6 hours per day, 6 days per week
Room and board: US$600~1,600/year

1

Sino-Myanmar Border Village

Photos & article by Li Zhixiong

On the border of Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, hidden within a sea of lush vegetation, nestles a Myanmar temple. Amidst the shadows of Buddhist monks, lies a secret village called Mengjinglai.

2

In the Dai language, "Mengjinglai" translates as "a place following the red deer". According to the story behind it, a Buddhist monk from Chiang Mai, Thailand followed a golden red deer early one morning. When man and beast arrived in Mengjinglai, the deer vanished suddenly. But the monk decided to stay because of the splendid scenery. Later, the king of the Dai allowed his subjects to live there, forming the present Dai village of Mengjinglai. Before he died, the monk left a message asking the people to bury him so that his grave would face the sunrise. After his death, a bodhi tree grew in the exact spot where he was interred. To this day, the villagers go to pray for rain beneath this tree, which has become the sacred symbol of Mengjinglai.

The 229 stele is situated beside the river next to the village. It only takes one minute to reach Myanmar across that river.

★ Tourism Provides a Livelihood

The intimate connection between Myanmar and Mengjinglai of china is a special one, attributable to their close geographic proximity.

Born in Myanmar, Buddhist Kang Lang Wen (which means "knowledgeable" in the Dai language) was forced to enter regular society and become a soldier at the age of 21. But he hated the fighting life, so he left the military, married Yu'er, a Mengjinglai girl, and took up farming. Some years ago, Mengjinglai was transformed into a cultural heritage village by a travel agency. As a result, Kang and his family were able to move into affordable housing. The agency gave each household RMB150 and some tropical fruit each month. The residents were instructed to serve the fruit to the tourists that visited their village. Later, the agency subsidized each household with RMB100, with which the tenants would then prepare the fruit baskets themselves. Visitors responded warmly to the treats. As a result, the basic needs of each family are met, and they can save their incomes for future modernization.

3

1. Two young monks pass by Mengjinglai, on the border of Myanmar and Xishuangbanna in China's Yunnan Province
2. Thanks to his father's decision to move to China to avoid the heavy taxes of the Myanmar government, Yan Wen Kang (middle) now has citizenship in both Myanmar and China
3. Kang Lang Wen's back is tattooed with special symbols that he believes protected him from injury in war
4. The villagers of Mengjinglai are busy planting seeds in the farming season

4

1.The 229 Boundary Tablet stands at the side of a river near Mengjinglai Village. Just opposite is Special Region-4 managed by Sai Lin (Lin Ming Xian) of the Shan State, Myanmar

2.Yan Wen Hui has written a book in the Dai language to educate the young

Rise of a Wine-Maker

Yan Wan Hui is a celebrity in Mengjinglai. A professional brewer, Yan's ancestors were Mengjinglai citizens long ago. When Yan was young, his father often caught fish and shrimp at the riverside. Yan would set up a barbecue beside the water, giving some of the grilled fish to the Myanmar girls he fancied. His father would sit with him and watch the girls knitting at night. Eventually, his father married a pretty Myanmar woman.

Yan followed his father's lead, by marrying a divorced Myanmar woman called Yu Xiang . Since marrying, they are just able to make ends meet, but their relationship is excellent. Yan wrote a book in the Dai language to remind people of the importance of treasuring the present and the warmth of their families.

In the 1960s, Yan learnt how to brew rice wine, a skill with a 1,000-year history. Rice wine has a refreshing, long-lasting taste and can also help ease physical pain and relieve the mind. He even invented his own brand of wine using more than 30 kinds of local herbs. Yan's special-brew wine is extremely popular among the citizens of Mengjinglai.

Since Mengjinglai became a cultural heritage village, Yan's brewing skills have also become famous among tourists. The travel agency grants Yan RMB1,200 for including his brewery on the tourist route and another RMB1,200 as his salary every year for allowing visitors to tour the facility. The more the tourists that come, the more famous his brewing skills become. Eventually, he hopes to sell his wine overseas, earning around RMB7, 000~8,000 every year. Together with his rice fields, which he owns, his annual income will reach more than RMB 20,000, meaning a more comfortable life for his family.

★ Family Living Beside the Stele

Yan Ruan Hui, originally from Myanmar, has finally received Chinese citizenship. His grandfather was Chinese, and Ruan Hui fled to Myanmar because of the war and married a Myanmar woman. Yan Ruan Hui became a monk when he was eight, but was forced to fight in the war when he turned 15. The battles frightened him and he fled to China. Ruan Hui eventually married the daughter of Yan Wen Hui. He set up a store beside the bodhi tree selling cigarettes, bottles of wine and drinks. His son has married and now works for the travel agency together with his daughter-in-law. The family is a happy one.

I met Yan Hong in front of Yan Ruan Hui's store. Hong's daughter was to be married the next day. Her husband-to-be was a Dai-Chinese citizen. I was delighted to be invited to the wedding banquet as well.

I arrived at Dragon Village a little bit early to wait for Yan Hong. Longli Village is a China-Myanmar border village of 30~40 Dai households. As I walked towards the village, I saw signs indicating that I was approaching the border. But to my surprise, there was no wire fencing and no guards patrolling the border, only a woman washing her clothes in a crystal-clear stream. I decided that was Myanmar.

Finally, Yan Nan Wen (fifth brother of Yan Hong) fetched me. He works for the Myanmar administrative regional government. His farm fields are right beside the border between the two countries, representing his close relationship with Mengjinglai.

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3. The family of Yan Hong in Manhui Village in Myanmar
4. Tablets and signs announce the border in Longli Village

Future brides of Yan Hong's family and friends sew blankets for their trousseaus

★ Eight-minute Walk to Myanmar

You can walk to Myanmar in eight minutes from the 226 Boundary Tablet. I did not feel that I was leaving my homeland on the way to Myanmar, simply because what I saw and encountered was exactly what I might have seen in Xishuangbanna.

I came upon some 30~40 households beside the Myanmar temple. A few Chinese households run stores in the village. Pictures of Chinese Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) and Chairman Mao shone in the bright sunlight. Yan Hong's family is not rich, but they were still able to provide a gold ring, a silver necklace and some cash for the wedding.

The bride, Yu Kang, got to know her future husband in China, riding on his motorcycle. Over several dates, they fell in love. Yu Kang said Chinese cities were fun and big with tall buildings and so many people and vehicles.

By 5p.m., no one had yet come to fetch the bride. Some said the road was undergoing repair work, so the vehicle could not get through. Yan Hong was repairing a trumpet, which would be used by those who wanted to sing that night. I finally left before it got dark because I was afraid I would have trouble going back so late at night.

As I was leaving, I saw Yu Kang sitting alone on a step in front of the temple, looking toward the land behind the mountain. I understood that there were many people in this land looking forward to making new stories for their border families.

Tips for the Traveller

Brief introduction to Mengjinglai Village: Mengjinglai is a relatively large Dai tribal village in Xishuangbanna, situated at the border of China and Myanmar. In all, 99 families live in the village, which has a population of over 500. The village is 1,366 years old. The prince of Myanmar has visited the village. The entrance fee for Mengjinglai village is RMB50. No entrance ticket is needed for nearby Longli Village.

Transportation: Some airlines fly to Jinghong city, capital of Xishuangbanna, from major cities in China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Qingdao, Chongqing and Kunming, as well as from Bangkok, Thailand.

Accommodation:

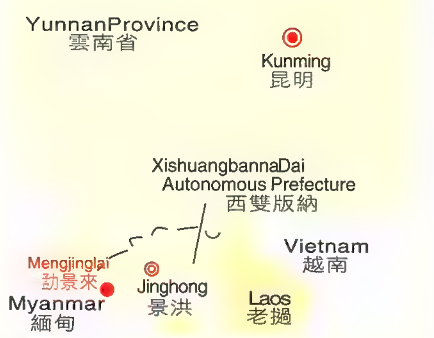
Dai Yuan Hotel (4-star) Tel: (691) 2123888 / Zhai Yam Hotel (3-star) Tel: (691) 2139888 / Crown Hotel (3-star)
Tel: (691) 2128888 / Banna Motel (2-star) Tel: (691) 2122974

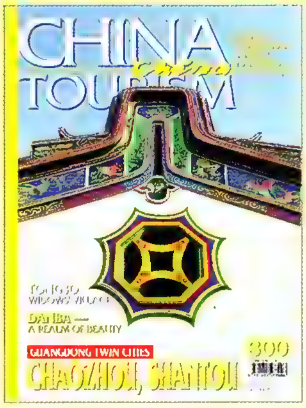
Recommended dishes: Pineapple rice, bamboo rice, deep fried seaweed, deep fried ox skin, roasted fish with citronella and rice wine.

Souvenirs: Hand-woven ethnic fabrics, jewellery, limber, tea, coffee, Chinese herbs and spices.

Travelling to Daluo: Daluo is a small town on the border between China and Myanmar in Xishuangbanna. To experience the culture firsthand, contact the Daluo travel agency and bring your identity card. The agency will apply for a visa for you and arrange for a tour guide. All visits must begin and end on the same day. The visa is RMB103.3 per person. Visiting hours are from 8am~5pm.

Accommodation: Daluo Forest Park Hotel (standard): RMB60 per day.





Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. We are always hungry for your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. And they are invaluable source for us to improve the magazine. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.

		Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Feature:	**Chaozhou & Shantou**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nature:	**Danba Beauty Valley**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discoveries:	**Tongbo Widows' Village**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Landscapes:	**Wangmangling Peak**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Profile:	**Shum Yat-fei**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Photographs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cover	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Articles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Travel Tips	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Art Design	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Opinions: ____

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Name: (Mr./Ms./Mrs.) ____
Address: ____
______________________________ Country: ______________________
Age: ____________ Occupation: ____________ Number of trips to China in the last 5 years: ____________

Where (how) did you first see *China Tourism*?

☐ Subscription ☐ Newsstand or bookstore
☐ Hotel Name: ______________________ ☐ Others ______________________

Main purpose for reading *China Tourism*?

☐ Planning trips ☐ General interest in China's customs, scenery, etc. ☐ Business
☐ Tourist Trade purposes ☐ Others ______________________

What do you like most about *China Tourism*?

____

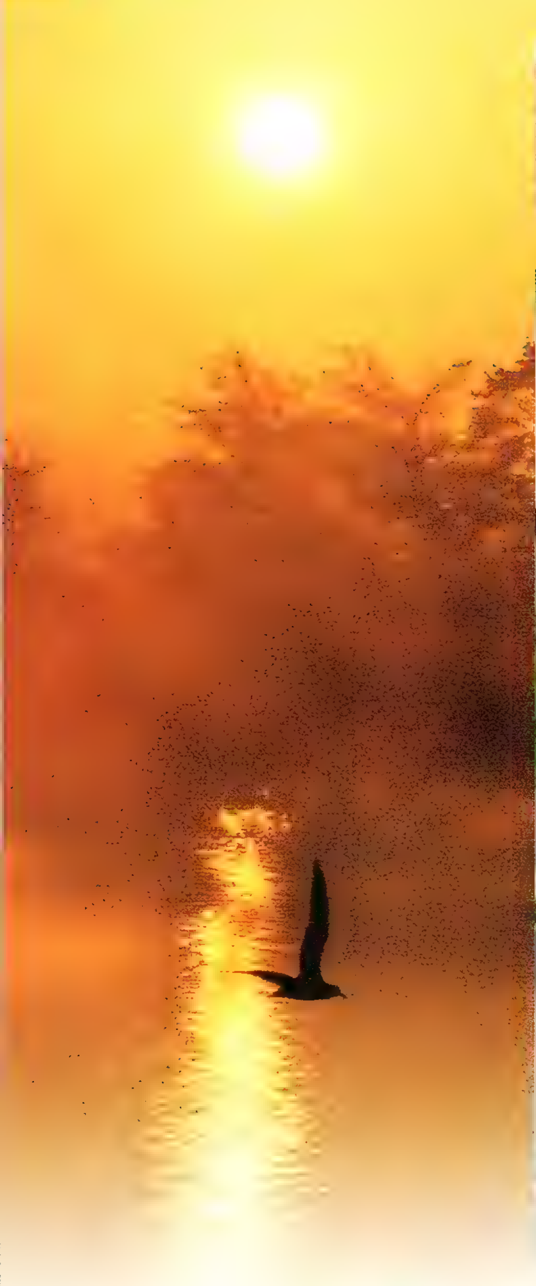
Are you happy with the factual content of *China Tourism*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What are your suggestions for improvement?

____

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

*Please mail this questionnaire to our office at 24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or fax to (852) 2561 8196.



Shum Yat-fei:

Wheelchair Abroad

Article by Mickey Ching

(Photos courtesy of interviewee)

Shum Yat-fei is a legendary writer, columnist and cultural critic in Hong Kong. With the aid of military maps, he climbed almost every known peak in Hong Kong with his companions as a youth. Then tragedy struck on his very first trip abroad during his university days, leaving him disabled for life. But the incident did not dim his passion for travel. Now in his 60s, Shum has plans to scale China's spectacular Huangshan Mountains and tour South America. His story proves that anyone can travel around the world, even in a wheelchair.

1. Talking with Shum, one gains knowledge as valuable as that found in any book (by Mickey Ching)
2. Scaling the Great Wall by sheer will. It was so strenuous that Shum has no plans to go back
3. Shum was very happy to travel to the Tianshan glacier in Xinjiang with his mother, who is over 70
4. Shum believes that serendipity enabled him to go up Taishan Mountain

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Walking is Best

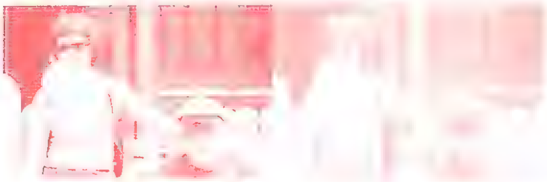
"I love travelling. I love walking better than riding in cars. One can appreciate more scenery on foot than sitting in a car. Only by stepping on the earth can I feel that I'm travelling; it is the most intimate, most direct feeling." If Shum had not mentioned this, the reporter would almost forget that one should be so lucky to step on the earth with both feet...

In the 70s when he was a college student, Shum left Hong Kong for the first time on an exchange tour to Taiwan. There he contracted a kind of infectious viral disease similar to polio that left him unable to walk. He would have to rely on crutches and a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, he was determined to continue his travels, to take his annual vacation just like everyone else. Shum smiled and said that if he had not contracted the disease, he would probably have taken many more exciting trips. Maybe he would not have married and would have roamed the world forever instead.

For more than 20 years, Shum has not thought of stopping or giving up. This strong will has supported him on journeys to Eastern and Western Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia and throughout China. Although he no longer feels the earth beneath his feet, he is willing to find other ways to gain the satisfaction travelling brings.

Helping Hands Along the Way

Knowing that travelling and sightseeing is no simple



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1. If he were not bound to his wheelchair, Shum says, he might have embarked on lengthy adventures alone. But having his wife by his side, sharing his journeys, seems a better bargain
2. Fuzi (Master Kong) Cave at the foot of Nishan Mountain, Shandong Province was said to be the birthplace of Kongzi (Confucius). Due to urgent need, Shum once answered nature's call in front of the cave, making it one of his more unforgettable travel experiences

matter for a wheelchair-bound person, Shum set up some rules for himself. He decided he would never revisit a place, no matter how much he loved it. And he vowed to visit places many other people would not consider worthwhile.

He has been very fortunate to have his wife to look after him on his trips, and he has often encountered helpful people on his journeys.

"When I went to Liangshan Mountain, the place to which the heroes from Outlaws of the Marsh were forced to retreat, I had no idea if porters could be hired there. If I could not go up the mountain, I decided I would be quite content to admire it from a distance." Another time Shum was visiting a palace in Seoul, South Korea. "The halls were separated by many terraces. Totally inaccessible."

Both stories have happy endings. A tricycle driver at the foot of Liangshan offered to carry Shum up the hill. In Seoul, a mysterious VIP and his entourage were among the visitors. Every time the group came to some steps, this person's bodyguards would lift Shum's wheelchair over the obstacles. There have been many such people who have lent hand in helping Shum's dreams come true.

Prepared for Any Trip

Shum is famous for his large output of travel essays, published both in his books and on his website. But instead of being a meticulous and organized planner, he seldom thinks everything through before his trips.

"The first thing to tackle is transportation. Accommodation is just as important, though it depends on the location. I don't plan a lot." Shum believes information provided locally to be the most accurate. Accidental discoveries may prove to be even more useful. When Shum went to Germany's Weimar region, he procured his information from the bookstore at the Weimar train station. Usually, as soon as he's checked in, he goes to the local bookstore for ideas. Then he heads back to the hotel to plan his itinerary with his pre-hired driver.

Shum added that he only listens to a tour guide politely, but he makes sure to take pictures of every written record set up at the sites he is visiting. These not only help him in his writing later, but also provide the most accurate information.

Perspective on Travelling

Shum is a well-known current affairs commentator, as well as a philosophy and translation lecturer. He is a scholar of profound knowledge with a busy work schedule. But as early as 1978, he was writing travel articles for Hong Kong's *Shun Pao* newspaper. With a different background from most travellers, he combines his academic knowledge with his experiences in his travel books. He also discusses travel with his readers via the Internet, developing a modern travel culture.

According to a traditional Chinese saying, "It's better to travel for a thousand miles than to read thousands of books". But Shum suggests another way. "Read one book per trip." Shum explains: "Not all knowledge is gained from travelling; we can learn things from reading about them. But there are

too many travel books. It's not possible to finish all of them before we set off. If we read just one, we will learn something without feeling overwhelmed."

Shum also likes visiting museums, especially the former homes of writers. "A museum is a miniature of a city. It represents that city, and one can get a sense of the environment in which a writer created his or her work."

He added that travel involves management skills. He must manage his time very well in order to visit so many places each year. "From a time-management perspective, there are four kinds of travel: Most urgent and most important; most important but not urgent; most urgent but not important; and not urgent nor important. If you apply these categories to your desired destinations, you will surely visit the place you most want to see." But, he reminded, "If one has old parents at home, then one should take care of them. This is not to ask you to give up travelling altogether, but just to travel later."

Triumphs and Setbacks

Among his greatest accomplishments are: the Great Wall, which he climbed on crutches; the First Glacier of Xinjiang's Tianshan Mountain, at which he insisted on advancing despite the sight of fallen cars littering the bottom of the valley below; the peak of Taishan Mountain, up which a friendly porter carried him. Not long ago he visited some small towns in eastern China laced with rivers and canals. With the assistance of the boatmen, he managed to climb up and down bridges and in and out of boats. He is now thinking of going to the Huangshan Mountains.

Despite his conquests, he does have his regrets. In eastern China, Shum could not check into the two-storey high folk dwellings. His next target, Huangshan, is equipped with cable cars. But will the cable car station be accessible to him? Will there be lifts in the guesthouses up on the mountains?

As usual, he is not going to carry out detailed research, since he believes too much worry never leads anywhere.

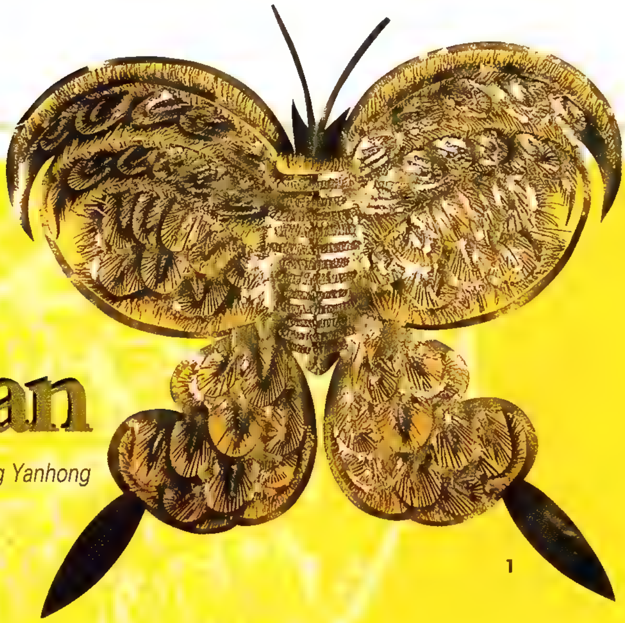
But it seems clear that a composed and confident attitude is the best thing Shum can take along on his future trips.

3. Shum negotiates a narrow cobbled alley in Shi Pi Nong

4. Enjoying the scenery at Daqi National Forest Park in Fuyang

The Old Butterfly Man

Photos & article by Huang Yanhong



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Zhang Xinzhi is an 84-year-old man devoted to the art of paper-cutting. He has spent his life trying to fulfill a promise once made.

Wanzhou, a city of Chongqing Municipality, is located beside the Yangtse River where the Three Gorges Project is slowly changing this historic and slightly melancholy city forever. When I first arrived in Wanzhou, I by chance heard a story about "The Old Butterfly Man" and decided to seek him out.

The old gentleman is named Zhang Xinzhi and is 84 years old this year. After spending his entire life devoted to paper-cutting, Zhang now carries the nickname for the work he is best known for—the "Butterfly Man". Born and brought up in Wanzhou, Zhang came from a comfortable background which enabled him to study as a child in a private academy. Later, Zhang's father was cheated of the family savings forcing Zhang to leave school and take up sedan-carrying as his father before him.

A Bond with Paper-Cutting

One day in the early 1940s, Zhang came across an old man in a long robe as he was passing through a graveyard. Appearing about 70 years old, cultured and refined, the old man stood before a particular grave all day, only leaving when the sky grew dark.

In the following two days, Zhang went twice to see the old man and spoke to him: "Please don't be sad, sir. Since the weather is so hot, you needn't come here every day. I will watch the grave for you." The old man was moved and told Zhang that he used to be an art teacher in Shanghai before fleeing here with his family during the war. Unfortunately, however, his wife became ill and passed away.

Zhang lifted up the old man and brought him back to Zhang's home. When the old man saw the walls in Zhang's home were covered with paper cuts, he excitedly told Zhang he had studied paper-cutting and would teach him what he knew.

The old man, Mr. Weng, became Zhang's paper cut teacher. Not only did Mr. Weng collect many butterfly specimens but he also had many paper cuts of butterflies. Said Mr. Weng to Zhang: "When you are able to cut out the details on a butterfly's body, then you will have made it as a paper-cutter. I'm too old to reach this level, so my hope for the future lies in you."

A year later, the war ended and Mr. Weng had to return to Shanghai. Although Mr. Weng offered to take Zhang to Shanghai with him, Zhang couldn't bear the thought of leaving his father alone and decided to stay in Wanzhou. But Zhang was certain deep down he would never see this old man again. When Zhang reached this point in his story, he broke down and tears welled from deep inside. I stood aside; no more photos, no more questioning—just a wish to let the old man travel again in his own world of memory.

Artistry Beyond Others

I took the old man out for dinner and then walked him home to see those butterflies he had exchanged for his youth. Zhang had remained single all his life, and due to a recent sickness the house was in disarray—medicine strewn over the table, his quilt untidily dumped on the bed.

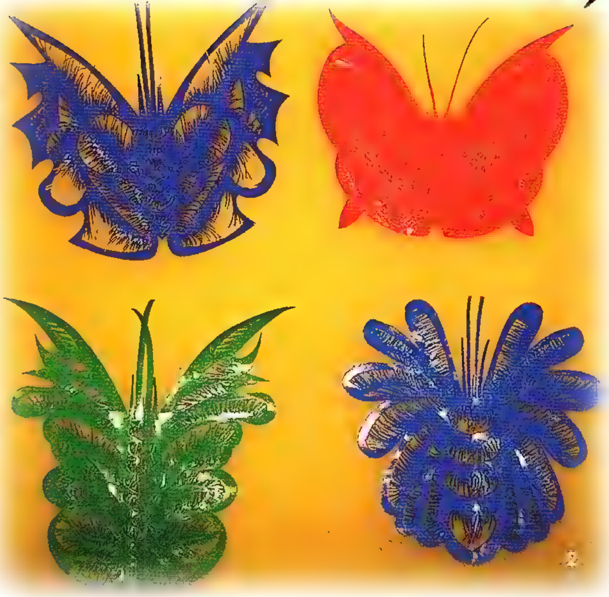
But despite the room's bleakness, through a locked door a world of butterflies appeared. On the wall, on chairs and hidden in cupboards, the room was full of colourful paper cuts, glittering as if butterflies were fluttering around the entire room. I examined one butterfly after another, as if in a daze. Apart from the many different patterns, I was amazed at his skill: all the butterflies were crafted with the finest gossamer hairs, created only by the exquisite turns of the scissors. Zhang had certainly not disappointed his teacher and had truly reached a level of artistry beyond all others.

With the old man's permission, I started to photograph the butterflies. As I was photographing, I suddenly realised: in this one hundredth of a second I was capturing artworks which had taken days, month and even years to complete. I could not help but be deeply moved by the old man's dedication to his art.

To show me the effect of butterflies in flight, the old man brought over a rattan chair and placed it under the light. Climbing onto the chair, the old man lifted up a pair of butterflies in his two hands and told me to look through the butterflies up into the light. How marvellous! Those fine silk hairs cut into the butterfly wings were perfectly visible. Truly, it was too lifelike for words!

In Love with Paper-Cutting

On the wall hung a photograph of the old man as a dashing, handsome young man. I couldn't help but ask the old man why he had never married. Zhang told me he had once dated a girl, but was constantly distracted by his paper cutting. Missing dates and turning up late due to his obsession with paper-cutting, in the end he had to give up the idea of marriage. No doubt it's true—when a man has something more important in his life than a woman, then love will never come easily.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To Zhang, paper-cutting had accompanied him through his whole life and become his essential spiritual support.

Today Zhang is retired and relies on a pension of 300 yuan per month that gets him through the good times but leaves him scraping when sickness comes his way. A few years ago, a visiting entrepreneur from the coast offered Zhang 200,000 yuan for a selection of his paper cut works but Zhang refused because he had already promised to donate the most prized pieces to the state.

I don't know if the relevant public departments can offer him some help, nor do I know if his paper cuts will be valued as highly as they deserve in the future. Considering his present state, I can only urge him to sell some of the paper cuts now and relieve some of the worry caused by his sickness.

3

1. Superb paper-cutting skills that even the finest gossamer hairs of butterflies were crafted

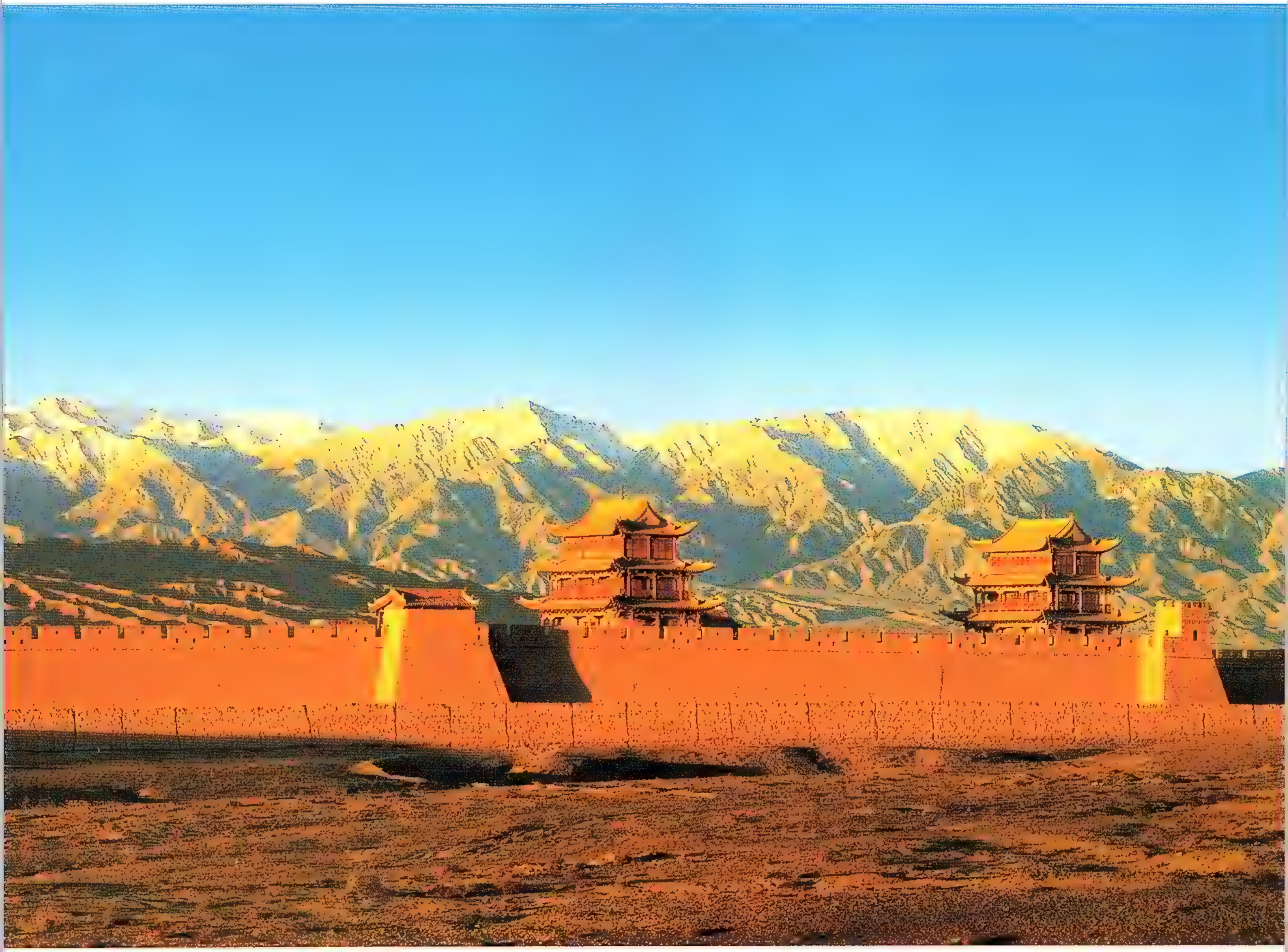
2. Various "butterflies" have shown the love for paper-cutting of Old Zhang

3. "Butterfly lovers" of Old Zhang

How to Capture the Spirit of Jiayuguan Pass

Photos & article by Wang Jin

Editor's note: Known as the "Greatest Pass Under Heaven", the fortress at Jiayuguan guards the pass at the western limit of the Great Wall, at the foot of the northern slope of the Qilian Mountains. It also dominates the surrounding Gobi Desert. Wang Jin, a veteran photographer of the region, shares with us some of his experience.



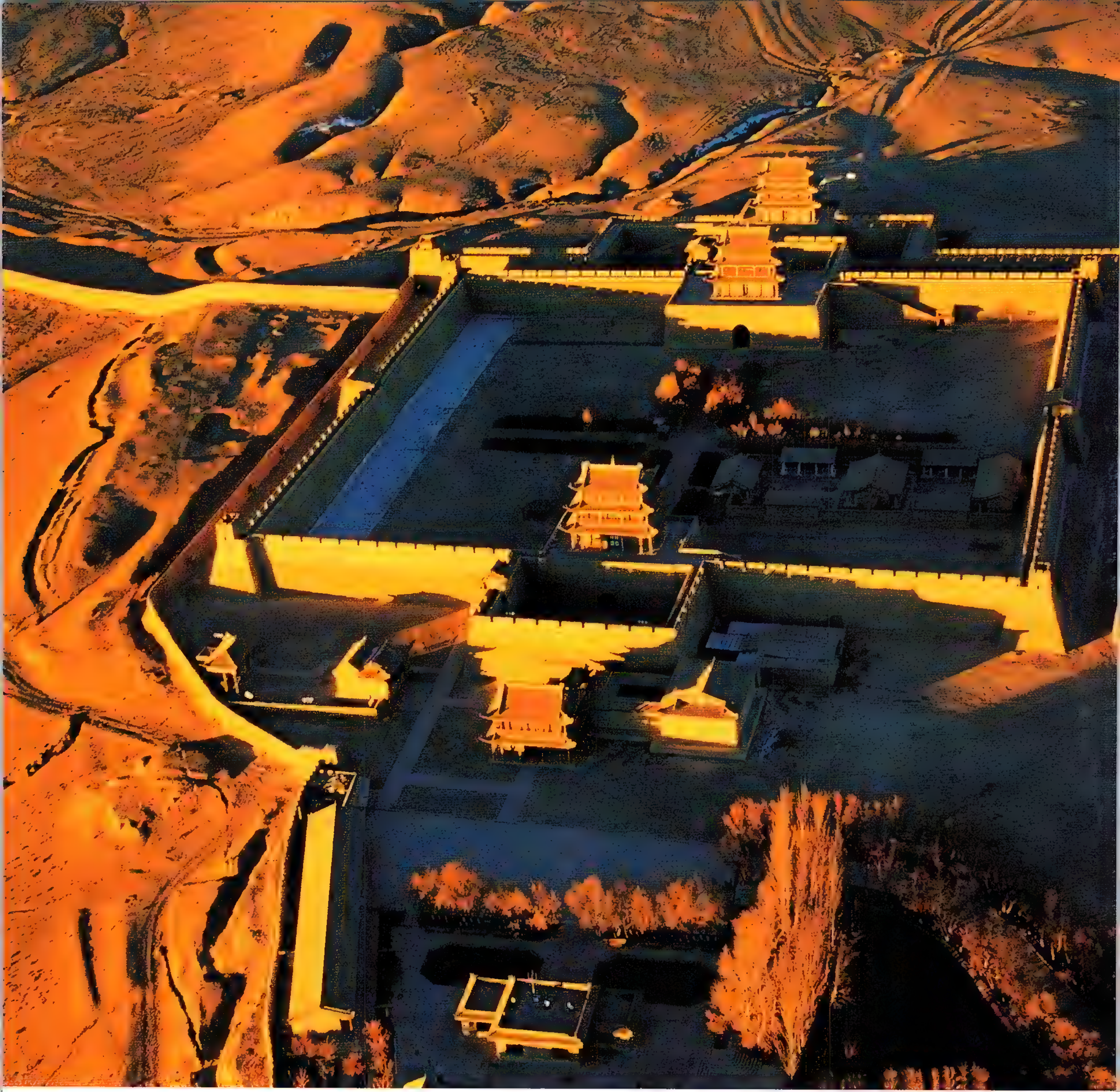
Panorama of Jiayuguan Pass (This was turned into a huge brocade and hung in the Gansu reception room of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing)

Position: Northeast of Jiayuguan, about 150 metres from the fortress.

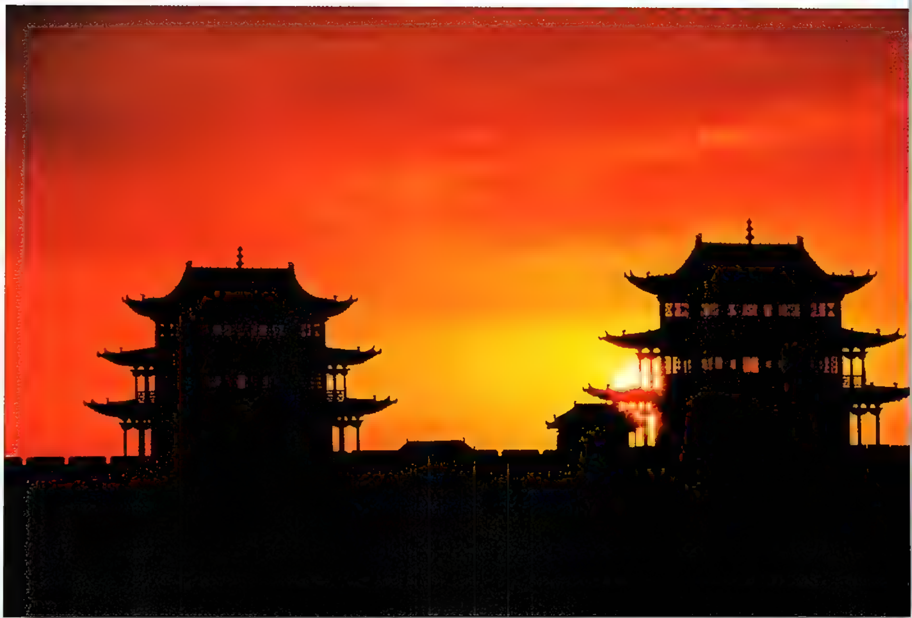
Time: A clear morning just after several days of rain during late August 1998. Days of rain had lowered the temperature which caused the snowline on Qilian Mountains to drop. The warm colours of the fortress stand out sharply against the snowy white. It is a rare picture as Qilian does not usually see that much snow in August.

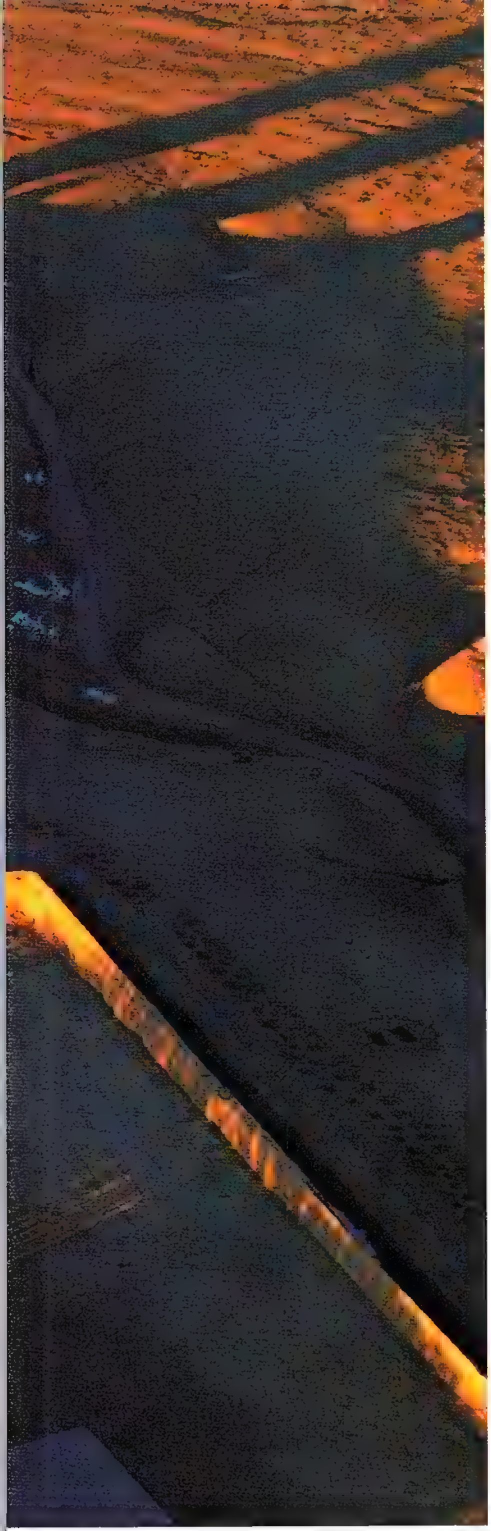
Equipment: Nikon 70, 250mm lens, aperture f/16, 1/8 shutter, Kodak 25° slide (4 consecutive slides).

A Diagram Showing the Shooting Points

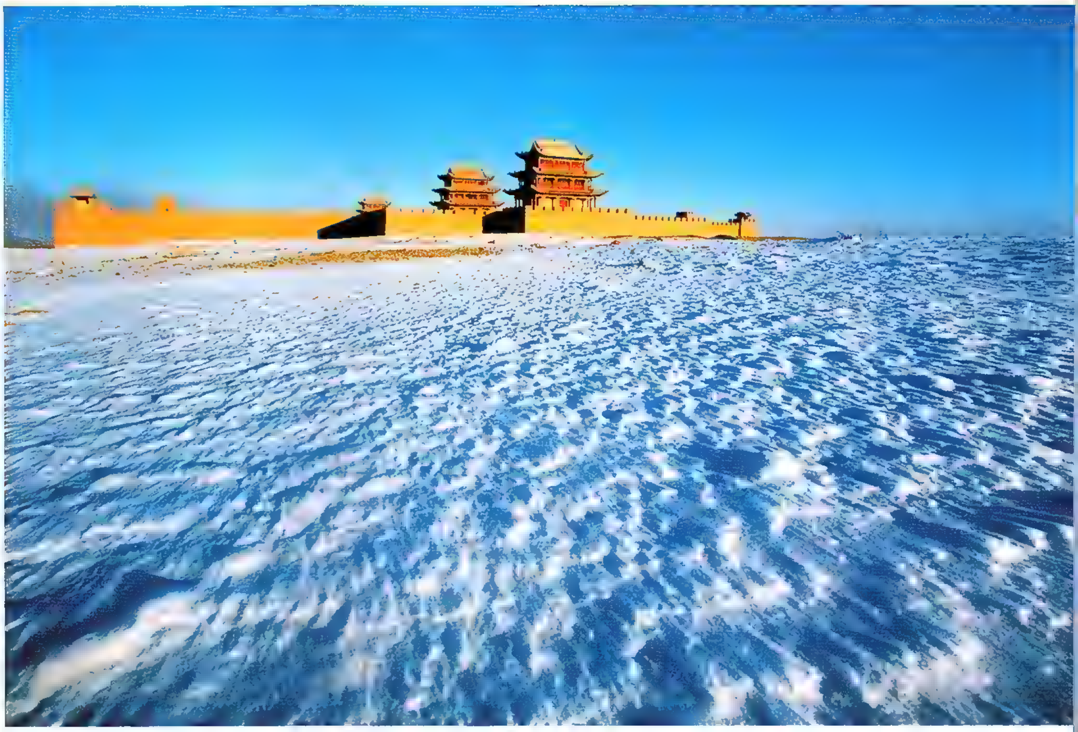


▲ ② **Inner Walls**
Position: Aerial, around 120 metres high
Time: Morning, early March, 2004
Equipment: Canon EOS-IN, 17-35mm zoom lens, f/5.6, 1/250 shutter, Kodak VS100° 135 slide





◀ ③ **The Gate Tower and Rouyuan Tower**
Position: Around 500 metres northwest from the western gate
Time: Morning, early January, 2004. Shot the inscription tablet pavilion on the first day. Fine weather continued the next day with mild winds and thin clouds. Set up the tripod and waited for sunrise, especially for the moment when the sun and the tower overlapped.
Equipment: Canon EOS-IN, 250mm lens, f/22, 1/30 shutter, Kodak VS100 135 film



▲ ④ **Gate Tower**
Position: About 150 metres from the western gate
Time: A fine afternoon after several days of heavy snow at the end of January 2001. Strong winds blew the snow into waves. Shot from a low angle with 17 mm lens to emphasize the wavy snow and bring out the transparent quality of the snow and gate.
Equipment: Canon EOS-IN, 17mm lens, f/22, 1/30 shutter, Kodak 25° negative. Darken the sky with Cokin gradual grey filter.

Best months for photographing: Jiayuguan is situated within China's long daylight zone with a total daylight hours of over 3,000 per year. September and October see a clearer sky with thin clouds, moderate brightness and cleaner air. So you have your backdrop of blue sky, white clouds, snowy mountains for the fortress as well as the best light of the year. Winter descends on Jiayuguan from January to March when the weather is quite stable and rainfall more concentrated comparatively. The snow brings a stronger contrast to the fort and enhances the sense of isolation of the structures amid the vast, lonely desert. These are the best months for winter pictures.

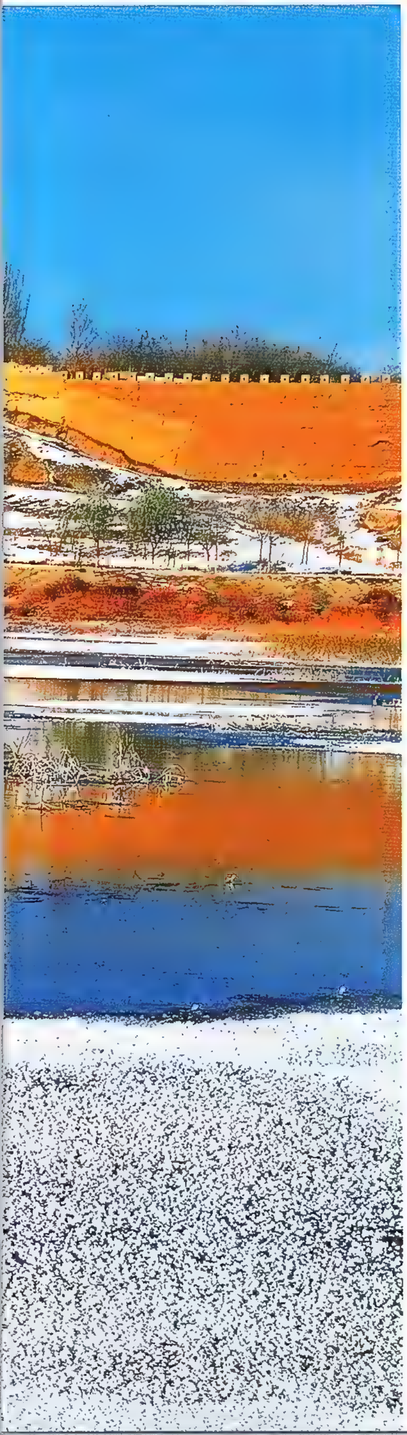
Recommended camera positions: Jiayuguan is a group of slightly rectangular structures. To the east are oasis and waters. To the west is the barren Gobi Desert. Some nice contrast in colours is provided by the snow-capped Qilian Mountains and the dark Heishan Mountains.

A great location to shoot the three wooden gate towers is 50 metres north of the fort's western gate, out on the vast Gobi. The structures with the rising towers are widely regarded as the most magnificent Great Wall sight.

At a point over 150 metres north of the pass one can take in the whole fortress with the snowy mountains. My work, titled "Fortress in the first light"(1), now hanging in the Gansu reception room of Beijing's Great Hall of the People, was taken from this site.

East of Jiayuguan is the place to be if you want to shoot the eastern gate tower and the beacon tower, landmarks of Jiayuguan. East and southeast of the pass is the Jiuyan Spring nurturing a large patach of vegetation which contrasts nicely with the battlements and the unwavering gate towers. The best time to take pictures of all these sights would be 0600~2000.

Tips for aerial photos: Shooting aerial pictures is my specialty. My experience is that it is best to fly in slower, more stable, yet light and agile and more manoeuvrable craft. You would need light cameras and lenses. Test your light inside the plane, done finely. Test the light first on the ground and use a hand-held one for correction. Wide angle and standard lenses are much more suitable than longer ones. Use better quality zoom lenses to prevent changing lenses.



The First Mound of the Great Walls
Position: 7 km south of Jiayuguan
Time: Morning, early September, 2001. The weather was not fine with an obsured sun, but suitable for backlighted photographs with less danger of over exposure. Both the texture of the mound and the bleakness of the ruins are rendered a sharper focus.
Equipment: Hasselblad XP, Hasselblad 30mm, f/22, 1/15 shutter, Kodak VS100° 135 slide

Jiuyan Spring and Jiayuguan
Position: About 150 metres southeast of the fort
Time: Morning, early spring in April, 2003. The temperature had risen causing much of the snow to melt. But flakes had formed on the ice by the lakeside. The warm colours of the fort contrast sharply with the coldness of the centre of the lake, but softened by the closer flakes.
Equipment: Panorama, Linhon 2000 Schneider 135mm lens, f/32, 1/8 shutter, Kodak VS100° 120 slide

Travel Tips

Gansu Province
甘肅省
Jiayuguan
嘉峪關
Beijing
北京
Lanzhou
蘭州市
Hong Kong
香港

Accommodation: Some of the better hotels in the city centre of Jiayuguan, 5 km from the fort, are:
Jiayuguan Guesthouse (4-star, add: 1 Xinhua North Rd, Jiayuguan City, tel: (0937-6226983);
Changchen Guesthouse (4-star, 6 Jianshe West Rd, Jiayuguan City, 6225266);
Xiongguan Guesthouse (2-star, 31 Yingbin Rd, Jiayuguan City, 6225115);
Qingnian Guesthouse (2-star, 4 Jianshe West Rd, Jiayuguan City, 6224671);
Jiugang Guesthouse (3-star, 2 Xiongguan West Rd, Jiayuguan City, 6713098).
It will be more convenient to stay in the tourist area of the fortress. There are Longquan Villas (Shanzhuang), Taihe Villas and Jiaqing Villas, built in the style of ancient architecture amid quiet environment. The fort is within walking distance. Room rates and food prices are standardized and reasonable.

Transport: Jiayuanguan-Lanzhou tourist express departs daily at 20:10, arrives Lanzhou at 7a.m. next day. Jiayuguan-Beijing express departs every other day at 10 a.m. Trains coming from and going to other destinations also pass through. From Jiayuguan bus station, 4 buses depart daily to Dunhuang at, 9, 10, 11 and 13 o'clock. Bus to Jiuquan every half hour. Other buses to Zhangye, Lanzhou, Hami. Taxi fare Y6 per 3 km in the city. Two flights daily to Lanzhou at 12:00 , to Xi'an at 18:00 hour.

Admission: Y60 to Jiayuguan, also includes museum; Y21 to First Mound of Great Wall; Y21 to Overhanging Great Wall; Y30 to Wei Jin tombs with brick wall paintings.

Climate: Annual average temperature 6,7°C~4°C. January is the coldest 9.4°C~9.7°C; July is the hottest 20.3°C~21.6°C. Considerable difference between day and night. July is hot at midday but cool morning and night. June and August call for some warm clothes which are necessary for September and October. There are usually 2°C~4°C difference between the fort and the city, but more during the early and late hours. Bring warm clothes.

Widows' Village

Photos by Walia (Stock photos courtesy of Tongbo Village Museum) Article by Huang Yanhong

In May 1950, the remaining part of a Kuomingtang division reached Tongbo Village on the Dongshan Island in Fujian Province. As a preparation of the retreat to Taiwan, they drafted 147 young men from the village, including 91 married. All of a sudden, the husbands and wives were separated. When the men were gone, the women lived as widows. In the following several decades, they suffered not only the hardships of life but the unbearable loneliness and the missing for their beloved. It is imaginable what a bitter scene there was when the old soldiers finally got a chance to visit their home village.

In 1988, I spent about two weeks travelling along the coastline in Fujian, visiting places such as Fuzhou, Chongwu and Xiamen, and reaching Dongshan Island on my last legs. The name of a village by the highway caused my curiosity. It was Tongbo Village, but the locals called it Widows's Village. As there were few people speaking standard Chinese, I visited the village with the help of a native photography enthusiast. To my surprise, it was a place where a serious of tragic stories took place.

One day in May 1950, Hong Weida, division commander of the Kuomintang military forces, led his remaining soldiers to Tongbo Village. The warring situation was serious and he and his men were sailing to Taiwan. Using the excuse of having a residential registration check, Hong called the villagers to the Huang Family Ancestral Hall. He then detained all the young and mid-aged men and recruited them to his army. In the village of 298 households, a total of 147 men, including 91 who had married and had their own families, were taken away.

Thirty-eight years later, in 1988, when the relationships between the two sides of the straits eased up, the old soldiers in Taiwan were finally allowed to visit their home village.

It was during the first days of the event that I visited this village. I saw the external walls of several houses built with the investments of those Taiwan soldiers were being painted. As a tourism fan, I took two pictures of them. After hearing one of the stories, I hurried to the Dongshan Island to continue my sightseeing.

The Bitter Separation

The visits of Lien Chan and Song Chuyu to the mainland of China this year reminded me the tragic village, so I went for another visit. Driving from Shenzhen in the morning, I had lunch on the Dongshan Island before going to Tongbo Village. The village had expanded a lot, with more houses constructed along the highway. The banyan tree, which used to serve as a landmark at the entrance to the village, was now surrounded in the middle of several rows of new buildings. It was here that the husbands and wives said good-bye before they were forced to leave; so the ground under the tree became the venue where those women expressed their missing for their husbands. Often, they gathered under the tree to express their sorrows to one another.

The Huang Family Ancestral Hall was still there, but had been refurnished. On the ground outside the hall, some pig-feeder was being sunned and several children were playing. It was here the young and mid-aged men were gathered and taken away to the gunship.

Half a century has passed, but the tragic scenes remain fresh in the villagers' memories.

Lin Xiuzhen had kept a shoe dropped by her husband when he was leaving. She took it as a witness of her missing for her man. Unexpectedly, after several decades' waiting, all she had received was the news of his death in Taiwan. The single shoe could never be paired, as had happened to Lin and her husband.

Lin Hui's husband was taken away when he was dragging his fishing net. He later trusted somebody to bring his wife an electric torch as a message of greeting. During those long years, Lin Hui always took it with her. In the evening, she often went to the seaside and turn on her flashlight towards Taiwan. It was too dim a

1. Could the passing of time wipe out pains from these women's hearts?
2. A temple keeper of the Tongbo Village
3. Yang Awei, who was drafted at 21, served in different places in Taiwan, including Jinmen and Mazu (stock photo)
4. A family picture of Huang Wenqing taken in the year he was drafted (stock photo)

4

light in the dark and surging sea, nevertheless.

When Lin Hongzhi was taken to the gunboat, his five-year-old son followed him to the seaside and cried loud: "Papa, bring me a pair of shoes when you come back." When Lin Hongzhi came home 38 years later, he had his son's words in mind and bought the shoes for his son, a middle-aged man in his 40s.

Wu Ayuan is a native of Guangdong. She came to Tongbo during World War II and married to Xie Laowang. The couple loved each other; and they often pushed the grinder shoulder by shoulder. After her husband left, she had kept the stone grinder as a company, hoping some day he could come back to push it with her again.

The widows' missing for their beloved was profound. During the lunar New Year and other festivals, they always laid a set of bowl and chopsticks at the seats of their husbands to "worship" them.

They Had [illegible] Of All Their Tears

The widows' stories had different ends. The saddest was not able to see their husbands again.

After the 38 gnawing years, each of the families came to a solution: some had their sons back, but the parents had passed away; some of the retuned husbands found their wives were gone; and in other families, the wives were continuing their waiting though their husbands had died.

An old soldier named Lin Shizuo had stationed in Jinmen Island. Though by distance it was very close to the mainland, he never got a chance to visit his dear ones. The heartbreaking missing of several decades took his sight. When he visited his village in 1998, his wife had died. He came to her tomb with others' help and knelt down to express his mourning.

A Husband with Two Wives: Most Common Result

Women of the Widows' Village did not remarry because they believed their husbands would come back to them. They stayed with their husbands' families, taking care of their parents-in-law and children. But most of the men remarried and established new families since they saw no hope for them to go home. When a husband finally came, with another woman, embarrassment took over the joy of reunion. Nevertheless, those who had come were lucky because they got open-minded Taiwan wives who encouraged them and even accompanied them to make the trip. In other cases, the wives did not allowed their husbands to visit their home village.

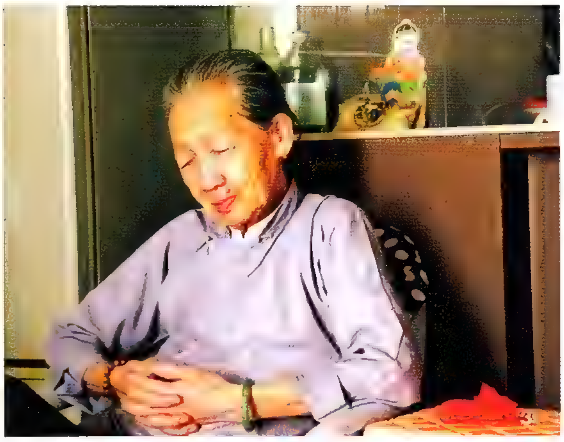
The husbands, who had Taiwan wives, had to leave after a brief visit. This time, their poor women did not weep. Possibly they had shed off all their tears over the past decades of waiting; it might also because they found there was no need for them to weep any more, since the hope they had kept for 38 years was shattered. When they believed their husbands would definitely come back, they could live in peace no matter how hard life was; now the husbands they had been missing day and night returned, but instead of staying with them, they left again, holding the hands of their Taiwan women

After the break of the deadlock between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits, the husbands could come to visit their home village freely. But what did the visits mean to their wives on the mainland? Nothing but gnawing.

Rare Happy Ends

There were not many happy ends. Among the separated couples, 17 had their dreams of reunion realized, after both husbands and wives going through the long miserable years with the strong desire.

These soldiers retired from Taiwan and returned to their home village to live with their wives. They had their ID checked and mailed to Taiwan once a year and their pension would be posted to them.



To our requirement, Ms. Xu at the village museum took us to the home of a Granny Chen Qiaoyun. At 87, she has problems with her sight and hearing. She used to walk around a few years ago, but during the recent couple of years, she seldom left the house. Many reporters from Taiwan have visited her. They called her Grandma and wished she having a long life so as to meet more compatriots from Taiwan. Chen once made a trip to Beijing for a TV program on the two sides of the Taiwan Straits. The clock presented to her by CCTV is kept in a glass box in her room.

Chen's husband, Huang Asong, came home for a visit in 1988. In 1991, he returned and settled down. He died at the age of 91. When he was drafted to Taiwan, Huang left behind a five-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter, and his wife was pregnant with another daughter. He did not remarry in Taiwan, waiting for the chance of reunion. The couple had their dream come true, though it came late. Huang was lucky to be able to have the last years of life spent with his wife and children.

Waliya, a reporter who came to the village with me, kept a distance while listening to Chen's stories, though it was her habit to take close

1. It was in the Huang Family Ancestral Hall that the young and mid-aged men were forced to Taiwan
2. A street of the Tongbo Village
3. Chen Qiaoyun cannot help weeping while the bitter past is recalled
4.Children may never know the heart-broken stories of the past

shots in an interview. She soon put down her camera and left the room with tears in her eyes. She later told me that she felt guilty to bother the old woman and touch her scars.

I had the same feeling too. We should not have conjured up her bitter past and caused her to suffer the pains again just for working out a story. Thereafter, we gave up the original plan to interview other women, as it needed too much courage to face their tragic fates.

[illegible]

Huang Zhenguo was the first man to tell the Widows' Village stories to outsiders. He is now the director of the village's museum, to which he has put in a great deal of his energy. He took the establishment of this tragic museum as a historical responsibility of his.

When the museum was built, he hung an oval mirror on one of its walls, on which he wrote a few lines to introduce the broken mirrors' rejoining after the 38 years' separation. Huang had written letters for those widows for several decades, so he knew all their bitterness. Staring at the mirror, he became so excited that he struck his fit on it, smashing it. "Who says a broken mirror can be rejoined? Is it possible?" He was beyond himself.

There have been reports with different opinions, of course. A woman journalist from Taiwan left with anger after she visited the village. In her report published in Taiwan she said the widows' miserable lives were due to poverty and their out-of-date feudalist ideology; otherwise, they could have chosen a different life by remarrying.

Huang did not agree with her. The women were not real widows, as their husbands were alive, he argued. They refused to remarry and waited for the coming back of their men because they had confidence in their love. It showed how great they were.

Writing Letters for the Widows

Huang Zhenguo began to write letters for these unfortunate women in the 1960s when he was studying in primary school. Even now, he continues to help them find solutions for their problems and comfort them.

One of the women asked him to write letters for her even after her son was enrolled in college. "The kids don't understand the past, so they don't know how to write such letters," she said.

In 1988, Huang recalled, when the first old soldier came for a home visit, he brought back 100 mails from Taiwan. Huang wrote all the reply letters on behalf of the receivers. As he was the only one to be trusted on the job, the villagers had to line up and wait. In those years, mails from the mainland to Taiwan had to go through a third place. Thanks to an overseas Chinese in Singapore, who was a native of this village, communication

between this village and Taiwan was maintained. Every time when he received his fellow-villagers mails, he put then into new envelops and re-delivered them from Singapore. This good-hearted old man died a few years ago.

One of the old soldiers, whose parents had both died, did not want to come for a visit. Huang wrote him a personal letter and added a poem at the end. When the soldier read the last line "Do come now when waves in the straits are calm and good for a sail," he decided to go home. Seeing Huang, he said, "I was brought back by your poem."

Huang always tried his best to include every detail in life into the letters he was trusted to write, as he understood the widows' hardships. The old soldiers on the other side of the straits admitted that they were often moved to tears when they read their mails. Very often, they gathered to share the exciting moment. One of the soldiers who often got letters written by Huang presented him a pen during a home visit. On the pen, the following words are carved: "Learned and reasonable, you built high merits in writing letters for others".

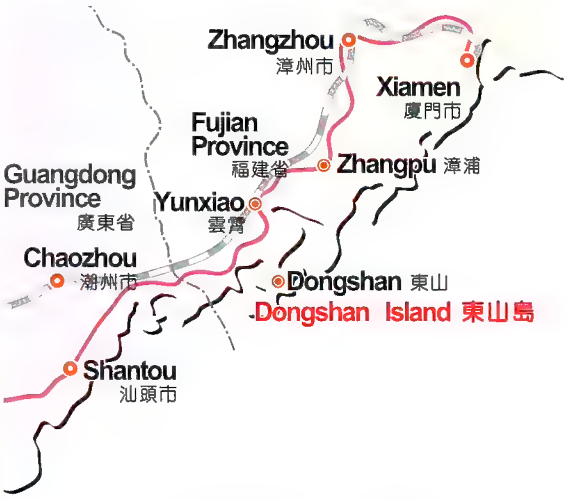
1. A cannon found at the bottom of the sea
2. A boy playing on the ancient city wall of Tongshan
3. Huang Zhenguo who has been writing letters for the miserable women over the past decades
4. All family letters have heavy stories

[illegible]

From Huang, I learned that among the 147 soldiers drafted to Taiwan, 26 are alive, including the three who now live in Tongbo Village. Of the miserable women, there are only four.

When I stood at the village entrance and looked at the clusters of new buildings, which had changed the village's original rural look, my heart was vibrated. There lived a group of respectable women, who guarded their faith for half a century, at the cost of their heavy and miserable lives. They did not intend to do anything great, but they told the world with their own experiences that there should be no more such tragedies. Peace is important to every Chinese.

Traslated by Gloria Shang



Tips for the Traveller

How to get there: Dongsan Island is 170 km from the Xiamen Gaoqi International Airport and 130 km from the Shantou Waisha International Airport. Buses are available from both airports.

Shuttle bus: There are buses from Xiamen, Fuzhou and Shantou to Dongshan Island. From Fuzhou, the leaves the Binhu Nanlu Bus Station for Dongshan at 8:00 and 13:00.

Other places to go: Tongbo Village is 1 km from the Fengdong (Wind Moving) Scenic Area, which costs 20 yuan for an entry ticket.

Maluan Bay Beach: Entry ticket: 5 yuan

Hunting Autumn

Like me, most photographers prefer the heroism of autumn to the daintiness of spring. Whenever autumn comes, we will be eager to prepare for the photographic activity. Gold autumn is the golden season for all photographers.

Photos & article by Chan Yat Nin

Master the Climate The splendor of autumn is very transient. It usually does not last for more than 7 to 8 days. In general, the golden autumn in China is transposed from areas of north to south and higher altitude to lower altitude. In terms of the traditional agricultural calendar and solar terms, white dew, autumnal Equinox, cold dew and frost settling symbolize the arrival of frost and the existence of gradually autumnal emotions. However, the solar terms only mark off the macroclimate approximately. The changes of the vegetation are actually an emblem of the realistic autumn.

Apart from the annual regular pattern which goes round and round in a cycle, the climate of every year does vary. We have to understand the phenology and climatic changes of the destinations so that the arrangement of itineraries can match with the pace of golden autumn. I always look for the weather conditions in the Internet. Making phone calls to friends from various localities to ask about the latest weather conditions will even assure a pleasant trip.

Fastidious in Equipment The materials of sensitization should be paid attention to. When taking photographs of the scenery in autumn, film with higher colour intensity and stronger contrast shall be adopted. I like using Kodak E100VS film as its colour is relatively warm, which suits with manifesting the golden-

1. **Forest in autumn**
Fir Tree Gully on the Bashang pastureland, Sichuan in late September.
135 film camera, 70~200 mm lens, Kodak ISO 64 slide, 1/60 shutter, f 8

2. **Red maples**
Twin-Bridge Gully in Liaoning in early October.
135 film camera, 70~200 mm lens, Fuji ISO 50 slide, 1/60 shutter, f 5.6

yellowish colour tone of the scenery in autumn. The Fuji RVP ISO 50 is my another favourite film, too. Its colour intensity is vivid, especially the green and red colours; although the colour intensity of ISO 100 of the same brand is not as strong as ISO 50, it has a more extensive adaptability.

All the films mentioned above are slides, which are more superior than the negatives in taking photographs of scenery. But, the techniques of using it are highly required.

If some of the functions of the digital camera are applied properly, much luster will be added to the works. For instance, the settings of colour intensity, contrast and focus can be adjusted manually. If all these three items are enhanced (especially the colour intensity), the effect will then be intensified.

A Matter of Perspective The angle of sunlight reflection largely affects the splendor of the colours. For instance, when we take pictures of the reddened leaves, the colour of the leaves will look especially shinny and bright if the sunlight is inversely reflected behind the leaves. The best times to take pictures of the scenery in autumn are dawn and sunset. During these times, the colour contrast is strong and the atmosphere is fairly good.

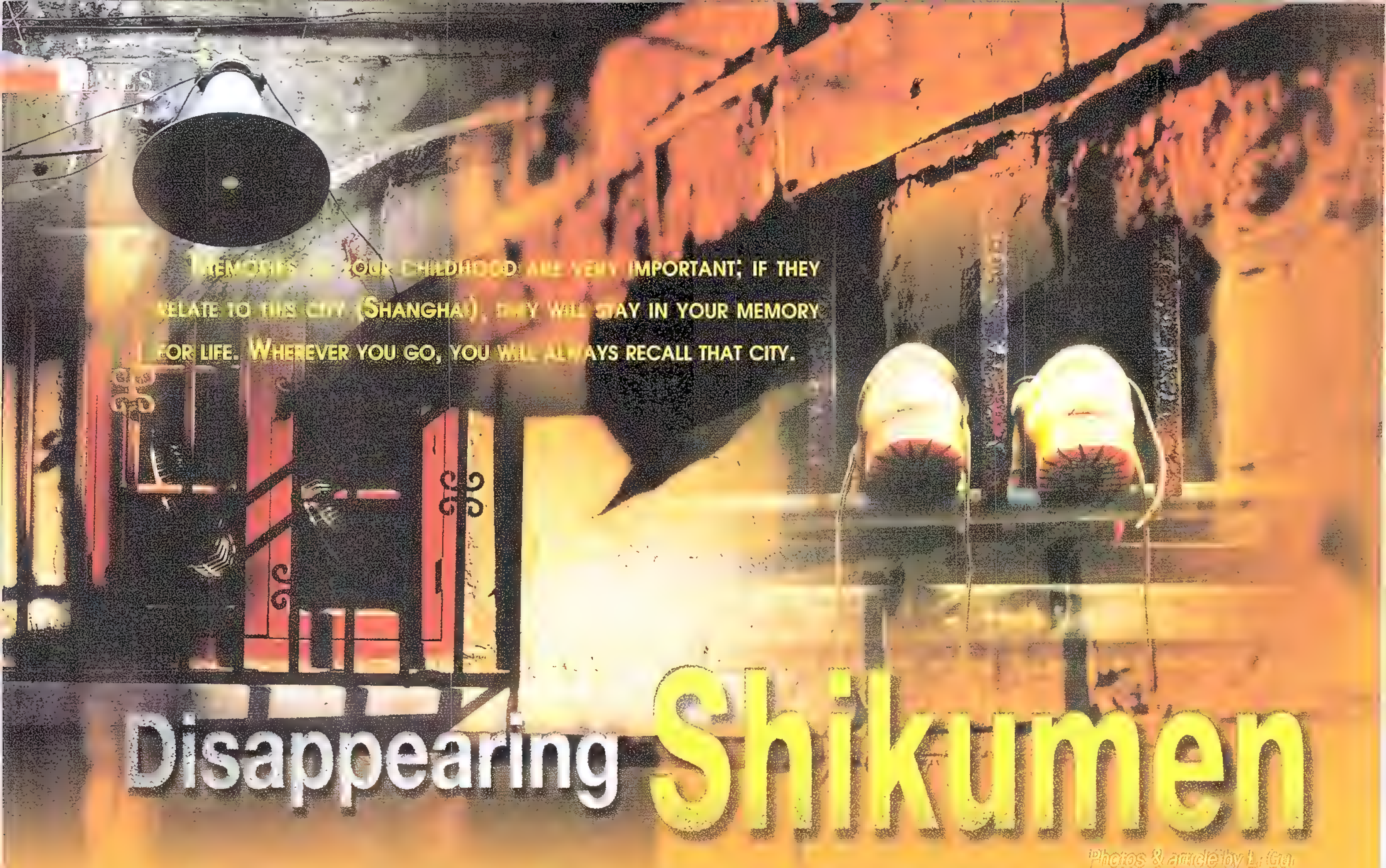
Sometimes, the light reflection of the leaves' surface will reduce the purity degree of the colours. Apart from changing the angles of taking the pictures, we can use the polariscope (i.e. PL lens), which are categorized under the filtered lens, to filter the light reflection so as to make the colours appear more intensively. Also, one special kind of filtered lens is produced to enhance the colour intensity. Different lens intensify certain kinds of colours, whose impact to other colours is relatively small.

It should be reminded that quite a lot of photographers commit the same common mistake: facing the vivid colours, they get excited and are distraught and seduced; as a result, they only focus on capturing the colours, but neglect to compose an artistic picture. This is why many people often revisit the old place to take pictures in order to get more decent and presentable works.

Using Natural Elements The graceful water areas and meteorological phenomena always add ambience to the scenery in autumn and enhance the effect of tableau. Water is a good partner of the scenery in autumn. We always encounter the problem of light reflection in the water surface when taking pictures of "waterscape". In this case, the polariscope can be used to filter off the distracted light reflections.

In the early morning of autumn, mist and frost are very commonly seen. The autumn mist always appears in cool sunny weather. Due to the large temperature range between the day and night, the mist will cool down and descend. It eventually forms the "hazy curtains" or even dense fog. If it is colder than 0°C (or even lower), all the plants will get frosted and tiny ice crystals will be formed. This scene is excellent source for close-up shooting. Mist, hazy curtains, frost can all be predicted. If it is a clear sky without wind, but very cold at night, you will expect to take pictures of dawn mist or frostwork in the early morning of the next day. Early snowfall in the golden autumn is a rare fantastic scene-the leaves are still gold and tangerine in colour, while the mountains and fields are covered by the silver make-up.

The degrees of brightness of water, mist, frost and snow are usually higher than those of mountains, forests and autumn leaves. The metering of camera is easily deceived, resulting in the lack of exposure. Thus, we have to set the exposure capacity properly so as to get the bright and colourful pictures.



Memories of your childhood are very important; if they relate to this city (Shanghai), they will stay in your memory for life. Wherever you go, you will always recall that city.

Disappearing Shikumen

Photos & article by Li Gu

My childhood Shanghai is not quite the same as the one mentioned in an atlas, nor the one well known as an oriental metropolis of skyscrapers, nor the one in which the city's development or pace of life quickens with each passing day.

The Shanghai in my childhood memories is mainly concentrated on a small street called Tai'an Lane in the old Shikumen (Stone Hooped Door) district.

[illegible]

Tai'an Lane is tucked along on Tianmu Road near the hub of Shanghai. I was born, went to school, worked on the job and lived here for more than 20 years. Now that I live elsewhere, as I look back, it seems as though I have stepped through a portal to go back to my childhood. Though so familiar, it is a place of strange tastes.

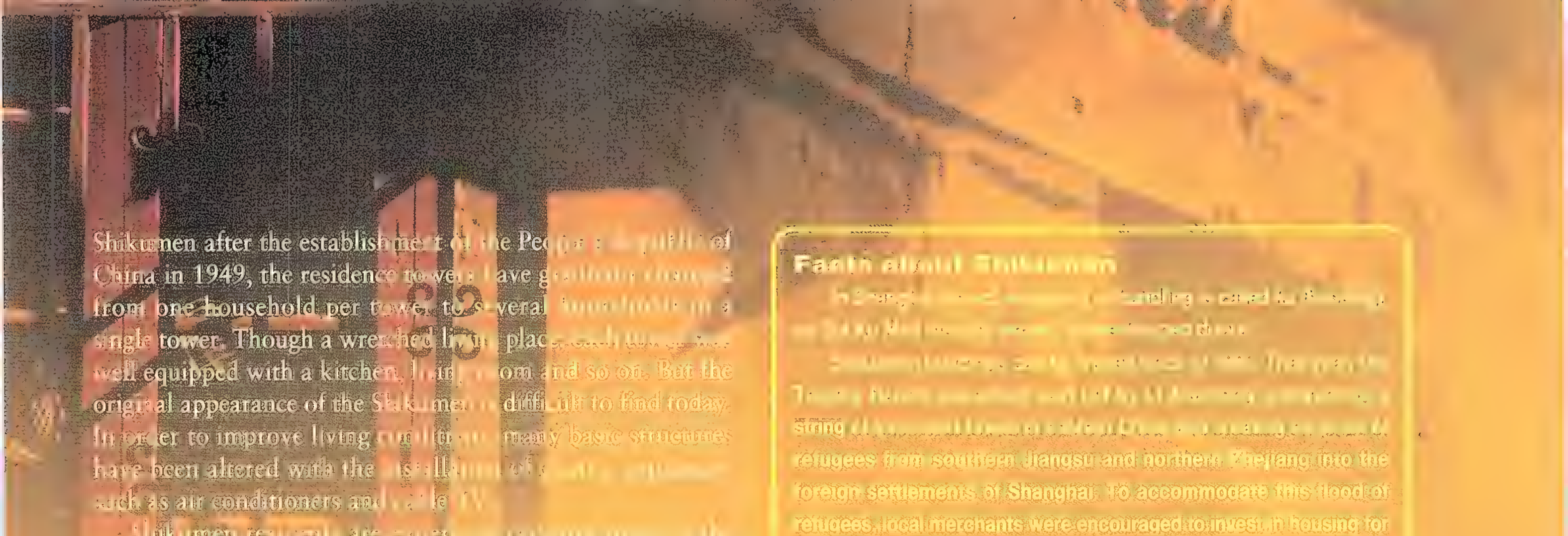
One of Tai'an's most recognizable landmarks is the huge water tower. The area underneath was supposed to house a water pump, but was later made into a home. Thus, the water tower was left empty for tens of years. When I was at primary school, I often stood beside the window in my classroom, pointing to the tower and telling my classmates, "Come and look, my home is just beneath the water tower!"

At the mouth of each lane stands a guardian residence, known as a *guo jie lou*, which connected two towers to the left and right of the entrance. Residents of Shikumen passed through it on their way out or coming home. Behind each *guo jie lou* lay a self-contained world. People who lived in the *guo jie lou* regularly came and went on narrow, slightly slanting staircases. In the past when money was scarce, the staircases were made of wood. Most are made of concrete now, but some well preserved iron ones still exist.

Just past the *guo jie lou* are the public lavatories and rubbish bins, symbolizing the biggest drawback of living in Shikumen — bad hygiene. The toilets and bins received all the waste produced within the area. A complex mixture of smells always hung in the air around them thanks to the open style design. Passersby covered their noses and moved quickly past them, but at some point everyone had to spend a lot of time there.

[illegible] Living Space

The Shikumen is generally laid out to the left and right along a central axis. The front gate will be set on the south side. Since ancient people moved to



Shikumen after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the residence towers have gradually changed from one household per tower to several households in a single tower. Though a wretched living place, each tower is well equipped with a kitchen, living room and so on. But the original appearance of the Shikumen is difficult to find today. In order to improve living conditions, many basic structures have been altered with the installation of [illegible] such as air conditioners and cable TV.

Shikumen residents are [illegible] the room is too small, they place the stove in the passageway, turning it into a kitchen. Around suppertime, the aromas of all the dishes mix together. Sometimes it smelled so appetizing that I felt instantly hungry, other times not. The by-products of such a close cooking space were greasy dishes. Sometimes the passageway was turned into temporary carport. Bicycles from every household would then be parked tidily.

Creativity in a Limited [illegible]

The packed-in nature of the homes, however, does not decrease the passion Shikumen residents maintain for potted plants. I am amazed by how creatively they use the limited space. Even in the tiniest lanes, greenery sprouts everywhere. People like to place their plants on balconies, under the roof or at water pumps. The otherwise grey-tinged Tai'an Lane is enlivened by these little plants.

The streetlamps along Tai'an Lane are now antiques. Although the electric wires are worn and twisted together, they still function well and light up every evening. Sometimes, the wires are used as clotheslines. Which prompts me to point out that in Shikumen the belongings of one household are never confused with those of their neighbours. For instance, the Jiang family would never use the Zhang family's outdoor water tap. In the small world of Shikumen, household dramas are kept to a minimum.

[illegible]

If the architecture of a place bears witness to its history and culture, then the Shikumen's mission must have been to cultivate the first generation of Chinese to have a sense of modern city living. A place where principle and order form the basic framework of life, the Shikumen has also cultivated that unique Shanghainese character — a meticulous and practical mind.

As time goes by, the Shikumen lifestyle is disappearing. More and more residents will be moving to newly built apartments, their old Shikumen residences destined for demolition.

The disappearance has started already but has yet to stop, perhaps it will go on until not a single Shikumen remains.

Facts about Shikumen

In Shanghai [illegible]

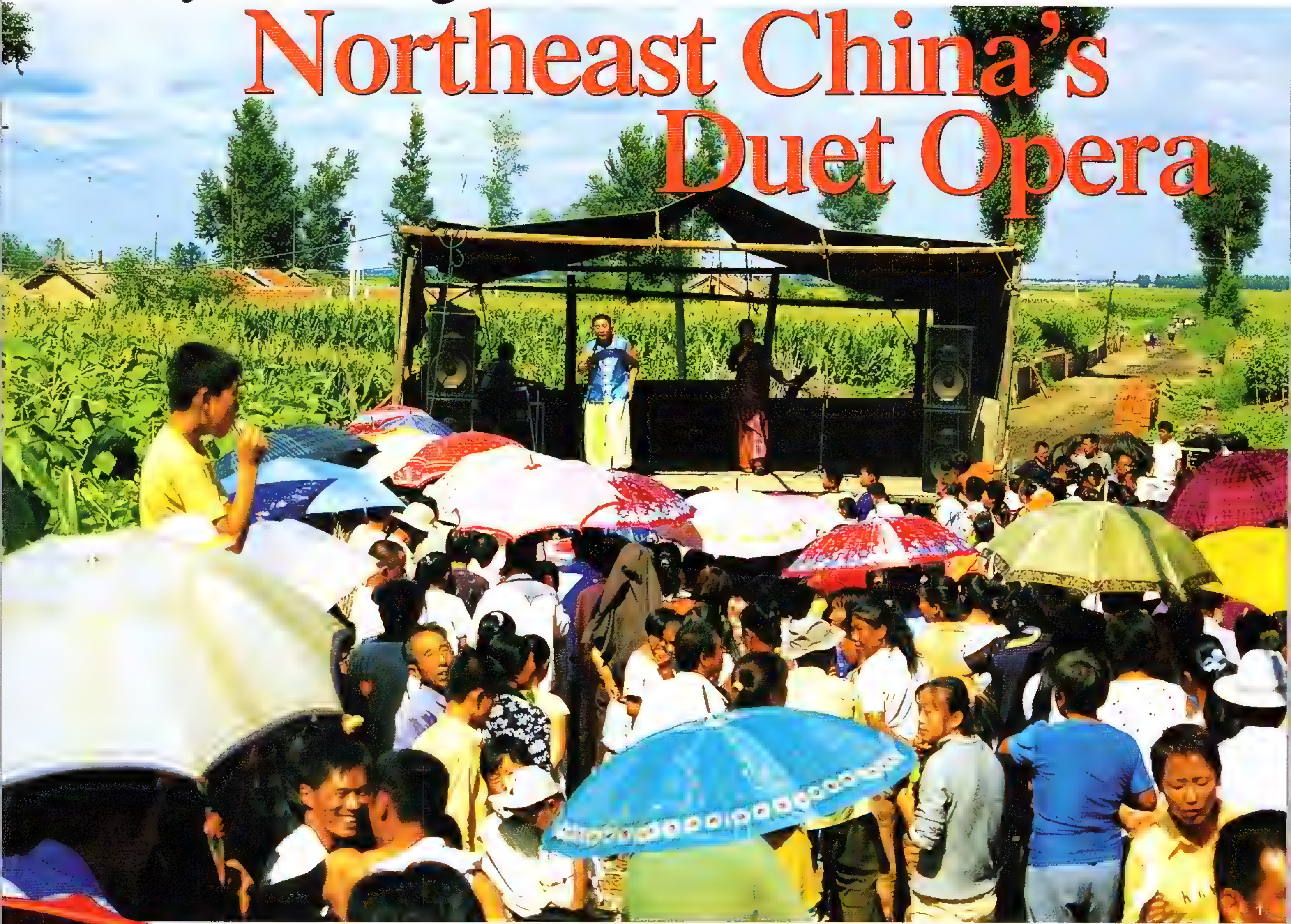
Shikumen [illegible] Taiping [illegible] string [illegible] refugees from southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang into the foreign settlements of Shanghai. To accommodate this flood of refugees, local merchants were encouraged to invest in housing for these people. To use the limited land more efficiently, the houses were generally built in rows of Shikumen-style buildings.

At their peak, Shanghai's Shikumen-style neighbourhoods numbered more than 9,000 and took up 60 per cent of the city's total housing space. In the 1990s, Shanghai began a new wave of renovation and development, demolishing many Shikumen-style buildings. Only when an increasing number of skyscrapers began replacing more and more of these houses did people begin to realize that such monuments to Shanghai's past deserved to be preserved.

Information gathered from the "Xintiandi Shanghai" website: www.xintiandi.com

1. Electronic wires in Shikumen are sometimes used as clotheslines
2. Shikumen were originally built to house refugees in the 1860s

Joy and Laughter: Northeast China's Duet Opera



Photos by Yuan Zhizhu, Li Chunfang
Article by Yuan Zhizhu

"Better miss a meal than an Er'renzhuan show", goes a popular saying in Northeast China. Er'renzhuan (song-and-dance duet opera) is a folk art that has survived for more than 200 years in Northeast China. The opera's stories relate the joys and sorrows of the region and instruct the performers on how to live.

A small city in eastern Jilin Province, Yushu is approximately 200 km from the provincial capital of Changchun. I was once told that if you wish to see an Er'renzhuan show, Yushu is the place to go. The birthplace of Er'renzhuan, it's where the most quintessential performances of the opera can be found.

Origins of Duet Opera

To get a better understanding of Er'renzhuan, I made a special trip to visit 72-year-old retiree Luo Hongzhi who grew up in opera troupes. When he was six years old, his father made a living as a horn player, while his grandfather played the bamboo boards in Beng Beng (as Er'renzhuan was formerly known). When they weren't working, his father and grandfather would teach Luo to play the suona (a woodwind instrument). Whenever celebrations or funerals were held in their village or those nearby, the three of them would perform with the opera troupes. Special occasions called Tang Hui would generally earn them 2.5 kilos of grain for each performance. For funerals, they usually made about 1.5 kilos. In those days, compensation for these performances never came in the form of cash.

According to Luo, Beng Beng opera groups of the time were categorized into two types. During the farming season, some artists would be busy working in the fields. In the slow season between July and September, these farmers would get together and organize themselves to perform Beng Beng. These troupes were referred to as Gao Liang Hong (Sorghum Harvest). The other artists were those that toured all year round and made their living solely on Beng Beng; they were called Si Ji Chang Qing (Evergreen). In the early 1950s, Beng Beng was renamed "Northeast Er'renzhuan" by the Chinese government.

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Bound by the Professional Code

Luo's son had arranged for me to meet a newly formed "Sorghum Harvest" crew, the leader of which was a 30-year-old actress known as "Er Mao"; her real name is Yan Xiao Min.

Er Mao's group was scheduled to perform in the village that day. Du Yanqi from Shisihu Village, Tuqiaozi Township in Yushu received them. In 1998, Du gave up farming to start a restaurant just off the highway. Noting the enthusiastic interest in Er'renzhuan, Du set up his own venue and invited opera groups to perform for the village. Back then, he was able to make around 600 yuan a day on entrance fees, drawing an audience of a couple of thousand from local and other villages.

The stage was set up in the backyard of Du's home, an area of a few thousand square metres partitioned off with colourful plastic drapery. While the actors and the musicians were busy testing the sound equipment, Er Mao suddenly appeared informing everyone that the evening show was cancelled. It turned out that, the day before, another person in the same village had trumped Du by bringing in an Er'renzhuan opera troupe that had already given two shows. Er Mao's group had to wait until that group finished before they could start their performance. An unspoken code has long existed among professional Er'renzhuan troupes: two opera groups cannot compete at the same time in the same place; they must follow a "first come first serve" order. For Er Mao and her "Sorghum Harvest" troupe, missing those performances during the 90-day slow season would mean the loss of a full day's earnings.

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Marrying Tradition with Modern Times

In Er'renzhuan, the partnering of an actor and actress is called jia'r. Since the early 1950s, when women were first allowed to perform Er'renzhuan, most jia'r pairs have been couples in real life. Er Mao's troupe included three jia'r

1. The indigenous Er'renzhuan has many loyal fans in the countryside of Northeast China
2. Er'renzhuan is a performing art featuring singing, dancing and comic dialogue performed by a duo
3. An artist painstakingly makes up her face before a performance
4. The suona and bamboo boards are essential in creating Er'renzhuan's background music

pairs, two of whom were husband and wife. Er Mao hired a temporary partner for herself, a singer named Wang Xiaolong. In Er'renzhuan, the pieces for the jia'r cannot be delivered well without years of collaboration between the actor and the actress. Er Mao's biggest concern was that any mistake or accident in the live interaction between her and Wang would damage her reputation in the area. So every morning she and Wang practised together on the makeshift stage.

Du Yanqi seemed happy with the turnout of more than a thousand people. Their clapping and cheering, and of course the revenue of nearly 1,800 yuan, came as a pleasant surprise to him. After the grand finale, Er Mao added an extra half-hour performance of pop songs and dancing. I later asked her why she did that. She explained, "In the old days when there weren't TVs in every household, people of all ages would come to the shows. But nowadays, the younger people like trendy things; so the pop song-and-dance act was added to suit their tastes."

While the artists were taking off their make-up, Du placed the mong bills on top of Er Mao's make-up case. Er Mao checked it once, then distributed the money among the group.

Risking the Loss of Character

Zhang Qing Wen, the 48 year-old suona player in Er Mao's group, once entertained thoughts of becoming the master of a "Sorghum Harvest" opera group. Earlier this summer, Zhang made plans to organize a troupe and tour around the villages, but he eventually gave up the idea.

One reason was that the compensation offered by potential sponsors was much lower this year; experienced jia'r artists were hard to get and expensive to hire, while the younger ones would be too "green" to perform a traditional opera and, besides, they would be difficult to manage.

Another reason was that, earlier this year, the government ordered a "clean-up" of Er'renzhuan. Artists were required to sanitize the "flirtatious lyrics" and "obscene lines"; otherwise various fines would be imposed depending on the cases. Looking rather perplexed, Zhang said to me, "Er'renzhuan is an indigenous local folk opera. The "obscene lines" and "flirtatious lyrics" are only meant to be playful, to make people laugh. It's as simple as that. If they were "cleaned up", the shows would be as bland as any ordinary play; the character of Er'renzhuan would be lost."

Cleaning Up Their Acts

Upon bidding farewell to Er Mao's "Sorghum Harvest opera group", my next target was to watch a traditional "Evergreen opera group". However, most "Evergreen opera group" performers were cherry-picked by the government during the mid-1950s to work in various professional opera troupes. Then I learned that the Changchun Peace Theatre was quite well known for its Er'renzhuan and had already established its reputation in Beijing with its "clean" performances. I decided to check it out.

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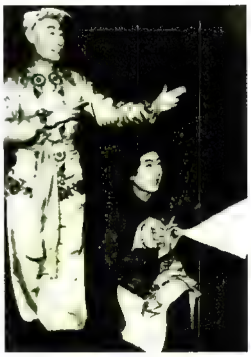
The show I went to see had just opened at the theatre, which had a capacity of more than 400 seats, 90 per cent of which were filled. That day's performance was a new play adapted from the historical literary works of the Chinese classic Outlaws of the Marsh. Throughout the performance, I did not hear a single obscene word. This was the first "clean" Er'renzhuan I had seen since I started learning about this northeastern opera. The stage set had also been altered to accommodate a quartet rather than the traditional duo.

Catering for the Audience

The management of the Changchun Peace Theatre told me that the people who come to see the operas can be categorized into three types: Successful business people who like to entertain their business partners and clients at Er'renzhuan; tourists who come from around the world to see and experience the folk culture of Northeast China; and, finally, the hardcore fans who are committed to attending a show at least once every other week throughout the year. This last group can be seen cracking melon seeds in their mouths during the entire show, savouring not just the taste of the seeds, but also the spirit of Er'renzhuan. From the 10-yuan seats in the back, it is difficult at times for elderly fans to make out the faces and costumes of the performers. They often walk up to the front, right by the stage, to get a good look, and then return to their seats to listen.

Obviously, for the first two types of audience members, watching Er'renzhuan is often a one-off experience. But the loyal fans look forward to each performance as a way of enlivening their daily routines. The stories they watch and the songs they listen to slowly sink in and filter through their hearts, stirring up a fragrance reminiscent of the region's rich, black soil.

1. Gao Liang Hong opera group is made up of farmers who temporarily tour from village to village during the summer
2. Professional performers practise their craft
3. At the Changchun Peace Theatre, Er'renzhuan graduates to a more glamorous venue



Find out more...

Er'renzhuan first developed during the mid-Qing Dynasty, branching out from the traditional northeastern yangge (harvest dance). This form of stage entertainment features a synthesis of singing, dancing and dialogue performed by a duo.

The earlier form of Er'renzhuan was called Beng Beng. Beng Beng artists worked in pairs, with one playing the role of the woman (dan) and the other that of the clown (chou sheng). Beng Beng inherited from yangge such elements as twisting, teasing and acrobatic movements involving the arms, back and shoulders as well as dance steps. Northeastern Chinese comic dialogue and bamboo board playing were also incorporated. Over the years, Beng Beng gradually established its mixed form of song, dance and dialogue, with a unique singing style featuring the nine tones, 18 tunes and the uttering of 72 haihai's (a sound to start the singing).

In traditional Beng Beng, both the female and the clown were played by male actors until the end of 1953, when Beng Beng was officially renamed "Northeast Er'renzhuan" by the Ministry of Culture. Thereafter, women started taking the roles of female characters.

Spa for the Senses Arxan

Situated in northeast Inner Mongolia, Arxan is the smallest city in China's frontier. Arxan's scenery is a picturesque array of white birch trees, lush green plains and brightly coloured rape flowers. Volcanic relics, natural pools and the welcome sight of Korean azalea are found everywhere.

We departed Beijing early in the morning and arrived in Ulanhot, capital seat of the Hinggan League, after midnight, still 280 km from Arxan. After a good night's rest, we headed northwest on our second day of travelling, passing Qarsan, Solon, and Wuchagou along the way.

Volcanic Hot Springs

Turning right from Wuchagou, we entered the woodland area of Greater Hinggan Mountains. The scenery from this higher gradient was even more breathtaking, the masterpiece of nature's artistry evident in the wildflowers and white birches. Arxan, situated at the west side of the woodland, is in fact the hub of active volcanic eruptions, as its Mongolian name Halun Arxan, or "hot holy water", suggests. From these numerous volcanic eruptions many volcanic lakes of various sizes, called "Heaven Pools" have formed. About 10 of them have been uncovered to date. The natural springs in Arxan are also renowned for their therapeutic powers, each easing different ailments. Of all the natural springs, the one at Wuliquan can boast one of the world's three coldest springs, consistently maintaining a water temperature of between 3~5°C.

Arxan produces a wide range of trees, in particular larches and white birch trees, as well as the rare black birch. In order to preserve such a fertile terrain, the government has strictly forbidden any industrial activities from taking place there, earning Arxan the moniker "nature's oxygen bar". With its unparalleled location and climate, Arxan is perfectly suited for growing rape flowers, a vast plain of which cast a golden gleam across Greater Hinggan Mountains every summer.

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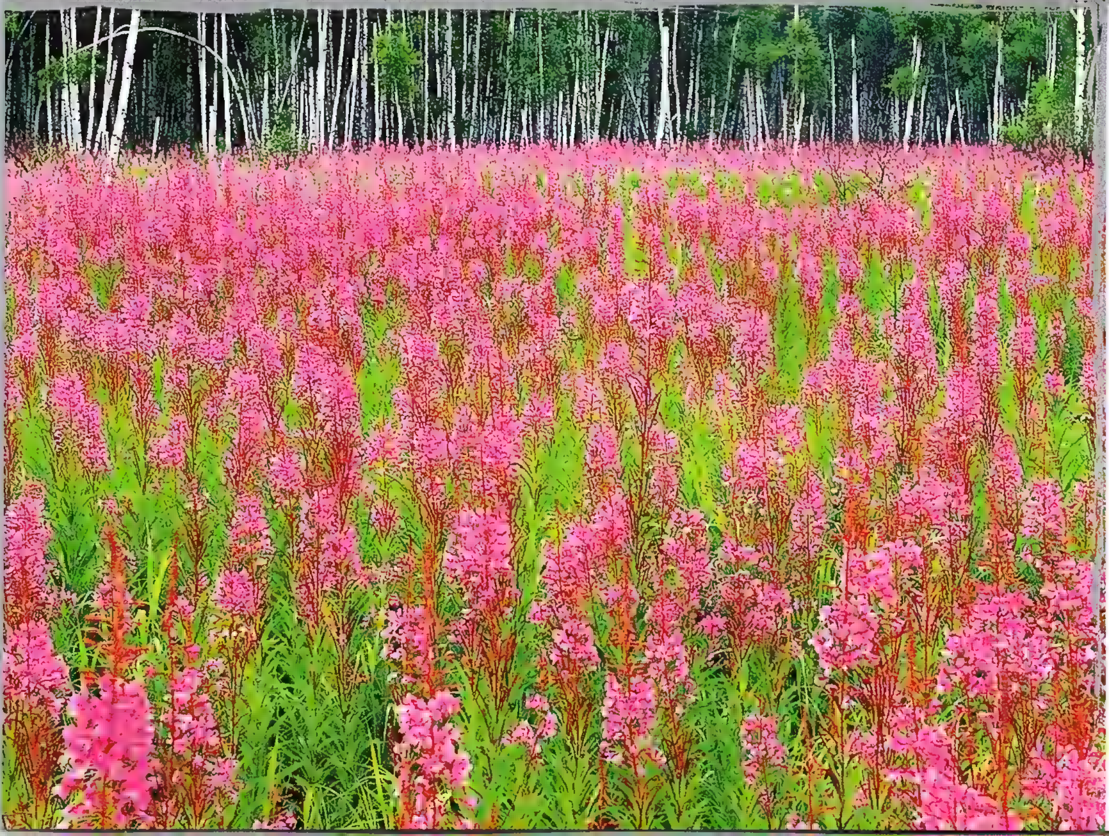


1. In summertime, the vast rape flower fields cast a golden gleam in Arxan
2. A piece of pastureland in Inner Mongolia viewed at sunset
3. Waterweeds flowing in Azalea Lake
4. Rose-purple Korean azaleas are seen everywhere in Arxan

A View of a Frontier River

The main tourist attraction is the "Heaven Pools" district, approximately 40 km from the city. Apart from the pools, the district's other attractions include San Tan Xia (Three Ponds Gorge), Shi Tang Lin (Stone Pond Forest) and Du Juan Hu (Azalea Lake), the latter providing some of the most magnificent scenery: crystal-clear water ripples with luminescence under the graceful sway of waterweeds and playful splashing of a host of wild ducks, a tableau characteristic of the country's northern territory. As if this weren't beautiful enough, the Korean azaleas-blanketed hills and plains adorn the already sumptuous surroundings of Greater Hinggan Mountains in bursts of purple-red petals, like icing on the cake.

The Sino-Mongolian frontier is just 20km from the city. Driving along the highway evokes a feeling of being one with nature. While this may sound like an exaggeration, the car is literally enveloped by the torrential roar of the Chalchyn Gol flowing directly to the right and a sea of full-grown rape flowers rolling on the left. If you are lucky enough to get consent from military officials stationed at the frontier, you may even get a once-in-a-lifetime glimpse of the Numu'ergen River. By going up to higher ground and looking far out to the horizon, you may see a silvery band winding its way through an extensive span of green — this is the Numu'ergen River.

And more...

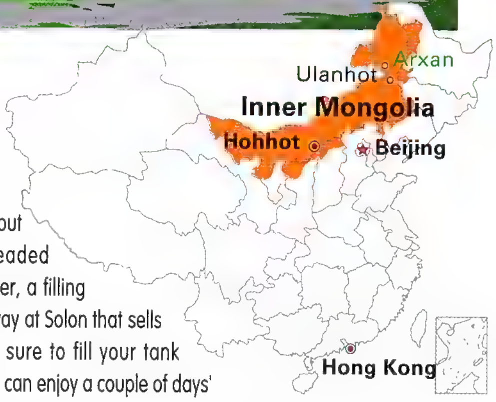
Arxan is in the frontier management zone, so remember to bring along your passport. Mosquitoes and insects abound — make sure to cover yourself with insect repellent and wear proper clothing in the forests. Wuliquan's spring water is safe for drinking and is free of charge. Just take your bottles or flasks to the nearest highway — the spring water flows right beside you.

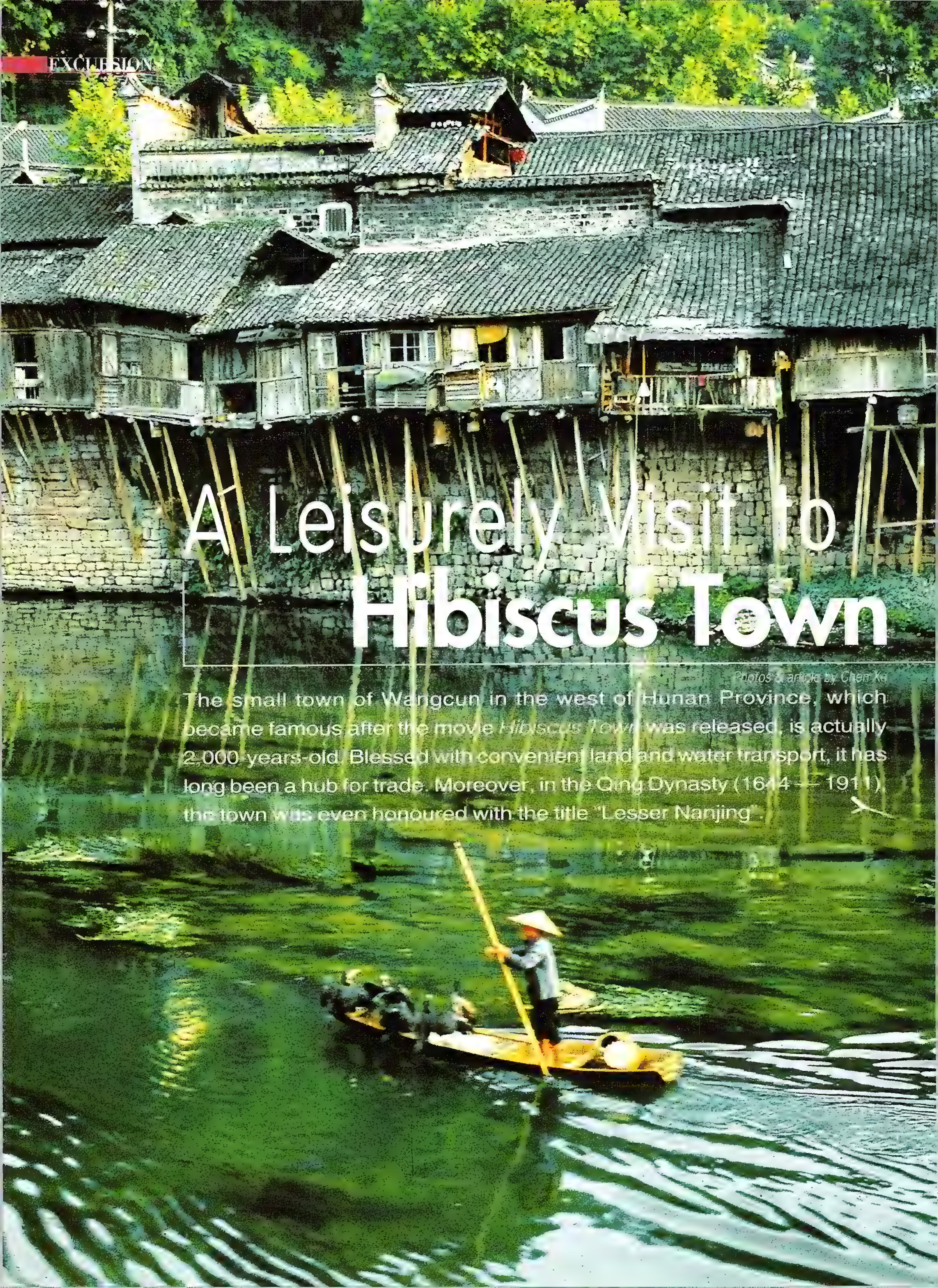
1. The Stone Pond Forest has proved active volcanic activities of the area in the past
2. Golden rape flower fields is the best photography source
3. Azalea Lake reflects the characteristics of the Northeast China
4. The Numu'ergen River meandering at the border between mainland China and Inner Mongolia

Travel Tips

Best travel season: Late July to August is the best time to visit, especially for taking photographs. Note that the weather can change amazingly quickly. It is always a few degrees cooler in mornings and evenings, so be sure to pack enough warm and protective clothing.

Transport: Take Train 2189 from Beijing's South Station and alight at Ulan Hot, then take either the train or bus departing for Arxan. If you prefer to drive, you can take the Beijing-Shenyang Expressway from Beijing to Lower Shenyang, passing Xinmin, Zhangwu, Tongliao, Tuquan and Ulan Hot along the way before arriving at Arxan. For the return trip, you can turn right from Wuchagou and take the National Highway, driving along the frontier line to East Ujimqin Banner, passing Xilinhot and Zhangjiakou along the way. Note that Arxan does not sell number 93 petrol, but only number 90 unleaded petrol. There is, however, a filling station along the highway at Solon that sells number 93 petrol. Be sure to fill your tank before setting off so you can enjoy a couple of days' travel.





A Leisurely Visit to Hibiscus Town

Photos & article by Chen Xu

The small town of Wangcun in the west of Hunan Province, which became famous after the movie *Hibiscus Town* was released, is actually 2,000-years-old. Blessed with convenient land and water transport, it has long been a hub for trade. Moreover, in the Qing Dynasty (1644 — 1911), the town was even honoured with the title "Lesser Nanjing".

angcun no longer bustles with ferries, carriages and horses as it once did long ago, but the ancient town and the age-old customs of the Tujia people remain.

I arrived at Wangcun in the afternoon. On the way, I could see smoke spiralling up from the roofs of the houses, built on slopes and supported by poles, in the woods by the road. In the paddy fields near the homes, some people were ploughing the fields, while others planted rice seedlings. The brilliant green of the seedlings formed a sharp contrast against the worn patina of the houses on stilts.

Home of the Tujia Ethnic Group's Leader

Although Wangcun is small, it boasts a history of 2,000 years. ancient that time, the ruler of the Tujia ethnic group resided in Wangcun, as it was the trade port between the states of Chu and Shu. Connecting Sichuan and Guizhou with Chenzhou (now known as Yuanling), Wangcun also acted as an important water and land transport hub between these places. During the reign of the Jiaqing (1760—1820) and Daoguang (1782—1850) emperors of the Qing Dynasty, Wangcun earned the name Lesser Nanjing and boasted some 300 stores and 100-odd hotels.

I stayed in a hostel on stilts. The Tujia people's pole-supported houses are well designed. Usually, they construct three main rooms on the higher ground of a slope, using poles to support the rooms built over the lower ground so that the roofs of both reach the same height. The main support poles can be 10 metres in length or longer. These homes have beautiful wooden parapets adorned with delicate carvings of flowers, grasses, fish, insects, birds and beasts, testament to the Tujia craftsmen's skills.

Tujia people live by very strict family rules. The elders hold the power in the family. According to ancestral tradition, the elders live in the main rooms while the youngsters live in the side rooms, which include the pole-supported rooms. The parts of the house on stilts are the sons' and grandsons' bedrooms or the girls' boudoirs. Children are sent to live in the pole-supported rooms from the age of seven. Young couples also sing love songs there. However, in recent years, most young people have moved away to big cities. As a result, many pole-supported houses have been turned into hostels or become curiosities amid the modern concrete buildings. Moreover, fewer and fewer Tujia people wear their ethnic dress in Wangcun or elsewhere in western Hunan Province these days.

Familiar Delicacies in Wangcun

When night falls, every household along the street is lit up to illuminate their beautiful artistic wares. Tujia people sit on the

1. The pole-supported house is a distinctive architecture style found in west Hunan Province. Even if the river level rises, the houses remain safe. Today, these homes are an important tourism resource. (by Han Lu)
2. The Tujia people prepare an early morning feast on the street
3. Delicious homemade noodles, Tujia-style

street holding their rice bowls, warmly inviting tourists to eat with them. At such moments, it seems unimportant to them whether the visitors will buy their handicrafts or not.

Like other Hunan natives, the Wangcun people love chillies. At dinnertime, spicy odours from the kitchens permeate the air along the street. It was so appetizing that I wanted to stay, but on the other hand so spicy that I had to leave. The aromas of food cooking and parents calling their kids home to eat reminded me of my hometown.

I stepped into a restaurant in an old house, only to see that the tables were almost all occupied. The owners served traditional home-cooked Tujia dishes along with fresh vegetables they grew themselves in the land behind their home. This close encounter with nature made the meal even more enjoyable.

A local friend heard I was in Wangcun, so he came from his home across the water by boat to meet me. As he stepped onto the bank, he bought a kilo of freshwater fish and said, "Tonight I'll have someone make a fish soup. Let's have some drinks together." When the fish soup was served to us in the restaurant, its fresh scent attracted everyone's attention.

As Wangcun awoke in the thin morning mist, I made my way down from the pole-supported house, watching streams of water meander between the flagstones along the narrow street.

1. Many new buildings have gone up in recent years, and some families have turned their houses into hotels
2. Tujia people roll cut tobacco into cigarettes
3. Secluded Dragon Valley near Wangcun has also become a popular tourist attraction
4. Dried fish is a characteristic food of the Tujia ethnic group
5. Xilankapu, a traditional Tujia craft

Walking up the waterways, I found the old well of Wangcun, a bubbling spring. From within the flagstone well a light mist rose from the surface of the spring water. This well not only provides the people of Wangcun with water, but it is also an important place for social activities. Early in the morning, young girls and women come to fetch water, washing food and clothes here. Sometimes their water buckets collide and resound with a crisp metallic ring.

A Tujia woman carrying a bamboo basket with steaming hot tofu inside cried out "Tofu (bean curd), tender tofu!" In answer to her rhythmic cries, people flocked to buy her treats. Some children grabbed a corner of tofu and quickly put it in their mouths. Their faces radiated joy and satisfaction as they chewed. Tourists should not miss the chance to sample tofu in Wangcun. Tofu shops can be found everywhere in the town. The shop nearest to the memorial arch is said to be one of the places where scenes from the film *Hibiscus Town* were shot; therefore, it has the best business.

At the market, Tujia people roll cut tobacco into cigarettes and stack them in pyramids. Visitors might mistake them for unpackaged manufactured cigarettes. Vendors displayed smoked fish caught from the river, gleaming with a lustre that whets the tourist appetite.

Without me realizing it, a whole afternoon slipped away as I wandered along the flagstone street in Wangcun. It was only 2.5 kilometres long. Then again, it's been a long time since I had such a leisurely day.

Transportation:

To the west of Hunan

First take a train to Jishou, and then transfer to Luoyixi. There are buses for Wangcun in front of the Luoyixi Train Station. If you want to visit other areas near Wangcun, you can rent a truck or jeep at a cost of about RMB100 per day.

Hotels:

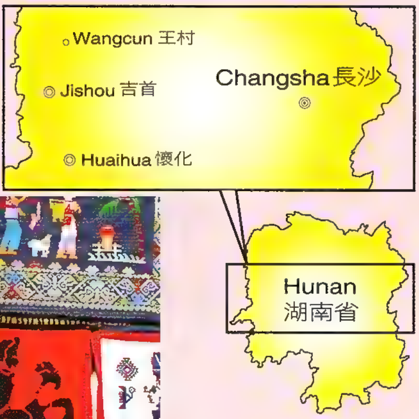
The pole-supported hostels of Wangcun are cheap and allow you to enjoy the customs of western Hunan. Prices are RMB30 per night or higher.

Food:

Hunan food is spicy. If you don't care for spicy food, let your waiter know ahead of time. The smoked meats and tofu of western Hunan are tasty; don't miss them!

Souvenirs:

Xilankapu, or richly patterned brocade, is a fabric unique to the Tujia ethnic group. Formerly given as gifts by Tujia girls to their brothers or lovers, the brocade has become a popular tourist souvenir.

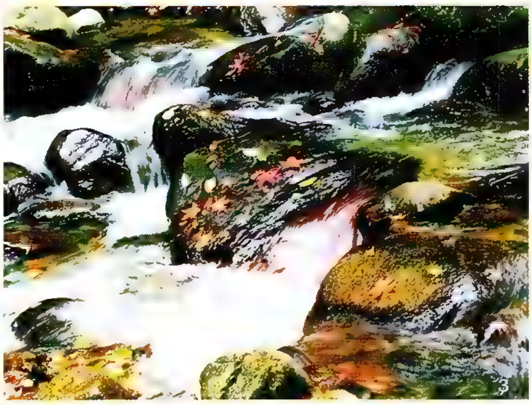


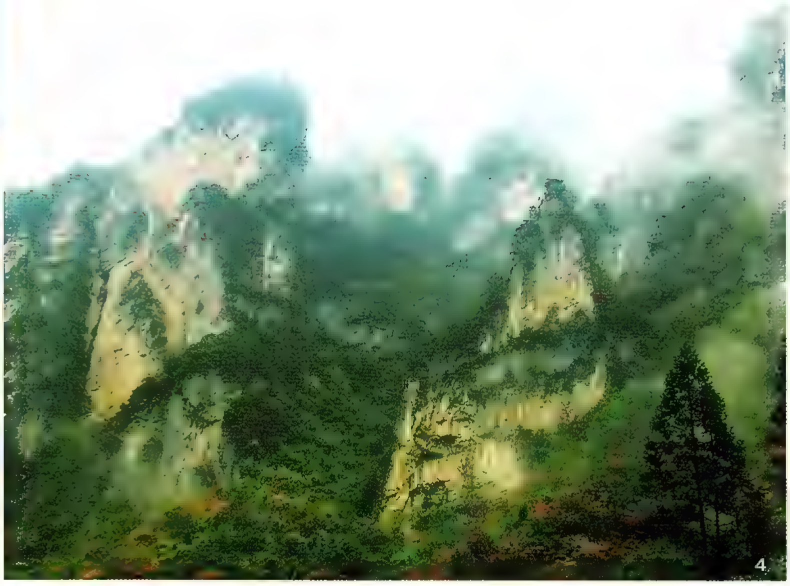
An Autumn Tour to Mt. Guangwu

Photos by Li Dan   *Article by Long Xuming*

Mount Guangwu in Sichuan Province dazzles in autumn with its mingled colours of golden yellow, fiery orange, pale red and deep brown. During our trip, we admired yellow leaves floating on ponds filled with rippling water, a truly beautiful retreat.

Our group of five made an appointment to see the red autumn maple leaves of Mount Guangwu, at the northern border of Nanjiang County, 70 km (Light & Mist) from the county town as well as 70 km from Hanzhong City in Shaanxi Province. The mountain covers an area of more than 400 square metres, with the main peak rising 2,407 metres above sea level. Mount Guangwu, Mount Longjia, Swallow Cliff, Peach Garden, Daba Forest Park, Jiaojiahe and Hanxihe are all found here.





Under-Developed Mouyang City

Setting off one morning from Guangyuan in Sichuan, we travelled to Mount Guangwu by way of Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province.

When someone shouted out the words "Mouyang City", I opened my eyes to see a so-called "ancient city" built from cobblestones and waste lumber. The entrance ticket cost 30 yuan. We decided this kind of "ancient city" was not worth seeing, but the local people told us some stories about the city's history. It is a pity the ruins where those events took place were not better preserved. Spurred on by the chance to make money, they have "restored" some ruins so badly that we did not know whether to laugh or cry. More serious is the fact that this unseemly practice is not limited to this place.

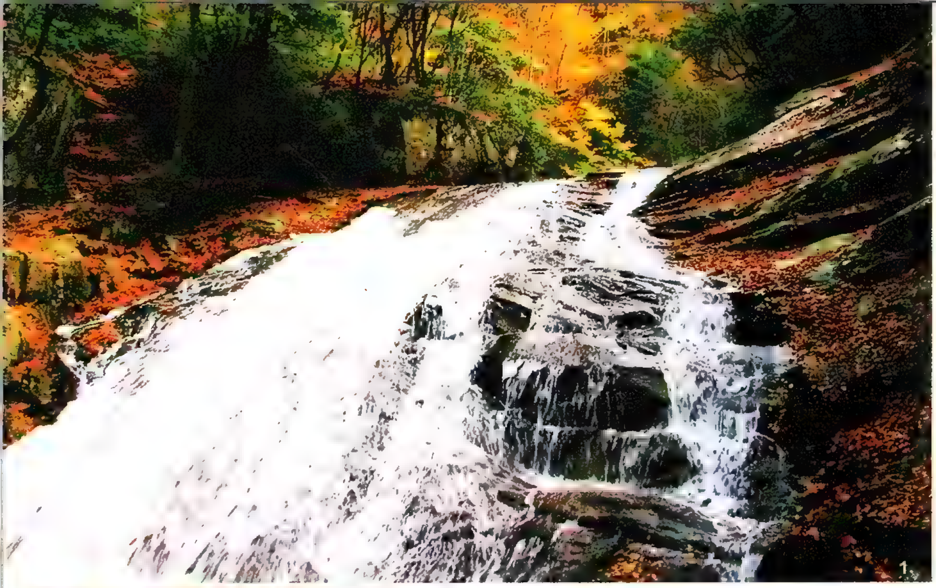
A World of Fallen Yellow Leaves

We stopped at the red maple leaves scenic area to take in the enchanting autumn coolness of the mountains. We had a splendid time snapping photos at Heixiong (Black Bear) Gully. But some photographers from Sichuan we met on the mountain path told us that "Da Xiao Lan Gou" (Greater and Lesser Orchid Gully) were even more beautiful. Upon seeing the splendid mixture of colours there-red, golden yellow, orange, dark and light red-we had to agree that they outdid Heixiong, if such a thing were possible.

We were awestruck by the intermingling red and golden leaves covering the mountains. Falling yellow leaves danced with the breeze as if goddesses were strewing flowers imbued with poetic sentiment over the hills.

It began to drizzle while we were in Peach Garden. The mountain was veiled in clouds and mist, so we could not clearly see the scenic sights. But a rock on the opposite mountain caught my attention, as it resembled a Bodhisattva, with a cave behind it serving as the Buddha's halo.

1. **Mountain peaks in Peach Garden**
2. **Golden-yellow leaves cover the entire scenic area**
3. **Red maple leaves mingle with winding streams, forming a picturesque autumn scene in Black Bear Gully**
4. **Mount Guangwu veiled in mist and clouds**
5. **Enchanting scenery in Daba Forest Park**



New Look of Old Forestry

Peach Garden is the centrepiece of the Mount Guangwu scenic area. In the 20th century, there was no village at that time. Now the area has been developed into a scenic spot asking 65 yuan per entry, not including another 15 yuan for vehicles charged in the name of environmental protection.

Visitors to Peach Garden are rewarded with spectacular views of the mountains, while in the Orchid Gully the trees are the main attraction. The ever-changing cloud formations and the amazing karst topography of Peach Garden, similar to that found in Zhangjiajie, also delight the eye. We had a joyful time taking pictures of the graceful mountains.

Zhaogong Pond in Red Azaleas

The moon glowed high in the evening sky. The weather finally cleared, allowing us to enjoy our first sunset in the five days since we'd left home.

We drove to the Eighteen Ponds scenic area next, passing Mount Jiujiao on the way. The entrance ticket here was 20 yuan. After several days of rain, the strong sunshine penetrated the multicoloured leaves creating a bright kaleidoscope on the ground and a perfect opportunity for photos. Someone excitedly called out, "Long live the sun!"

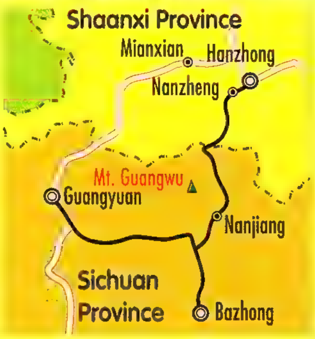
Having started off at 8 a.m., we did not reach the Eighteen Ponds until five in the afternoon because the path was covered with red leaves. We were the only tourists in that area so it was very quiet.

Since it was getting dark, we decided to rest for the night. We set off early next morning and drove along the ponds dappled with yellow leaves, the colours of the ripples changing continuously in the reflected sunlight. We all felt free and relaxed. Eighteen ponds are found in this area, each connected to the other, hence the name.

We left the mountain reluctantly and arrived at Nanjiang City, a new city with a strong commercial feel, at nine that evening. Hongsimen (Red Four Gate), the only cultural site, was surrounded by rows of concrete buildings. We feasted on the meat of a Mongolian gazelle to our hearts content and brought our autumn trip to an end.

1. **Zhucaogou Waterfall in 18 Ponds Scenic Area**
2. **The carpet of leaves covering Mount Guangwu attracts countless photographers**

Travel Tips



Transportation: Tourists may take a train from Chengdu to Guangyuan, and then take a bus to Nanjiang County. There are buses in Nanjiang that run directly to Mount Guangwu. Or you may take a train from Xi'an to Hanzhong, and then take a bus to Mount Guangwu.

Accommodation:

Guangwushan Hotel (three stars)	Tel: (827) 886 1128	Guangwu Villa	Tel: (827) 886 1155
Jinhui Hotel (two stars)	Tel: (827) 822 2955	Linhai Villa	Tel: (827) 886 1098
Fengye Hotel	Tel: (827) 886 1122	Telephone of the scenic area: (827) 886 1072	

Entrance tickets: 30 yuan for ancient Mouyang City; 65 yuan for Peach Garden, plus an additional 15 yuan for vehicles in order to protect the environment.

Scenic areas nearby:

Nankan Grottoes, behind Nankan Hill, is 1 km south of Bazhong City, date back to the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-581) and were built into a large group of caves thereafter through continuous repairs and digging. More than 2,000 statues remain in the 137 niches, along with 14 Buddhist stone pillars and 10 tablets, attesting to the ancient culture of Bazhong.

Mount Yinling, originally called Mount Lingying, is located in Zaolin Township in the north of Bazhong City, 10 km from the city proper. The area used to be a holy land of Daoism and Buddhism to the Northern Wei. Some temple ruins can still be seen. Many interestingly shaped rocks surround the main peak, such as Flying Rock, Head-low Rock and Sutra-dry Rock.

The Tomb of Yan Yan. Yan Yan was a general in the Han Dynasty. He was highly praised for his meritorious service. There is also a statue of Yan Yan engraved by Lu Chengben, magistrate of the prefecture, in the 9th year of Qing Emperor Daoguang's reign.

The Unrivalled "Ear"

Photos & article by Song Ming, Gao Jimin

"Tong Erduo" (Tong's Ears) is both a popular Sichuan delicacy and the sobriquet of its inventor. A fleeting glimpse of the dish gives the impression of cold pig's ears in a spicy dressing. But what is known about the culinary artist behind this creation?

Tong Bangxiu's story is almost legend in his home in Dechang County, Sichuan Province. Tong, now 54, has been physically handicapped for most of his life. However, through his extraordinary perseverance, he became famous throughout the Panxi region for his rendition of the dish that was later named after him: "Tong's Ears".

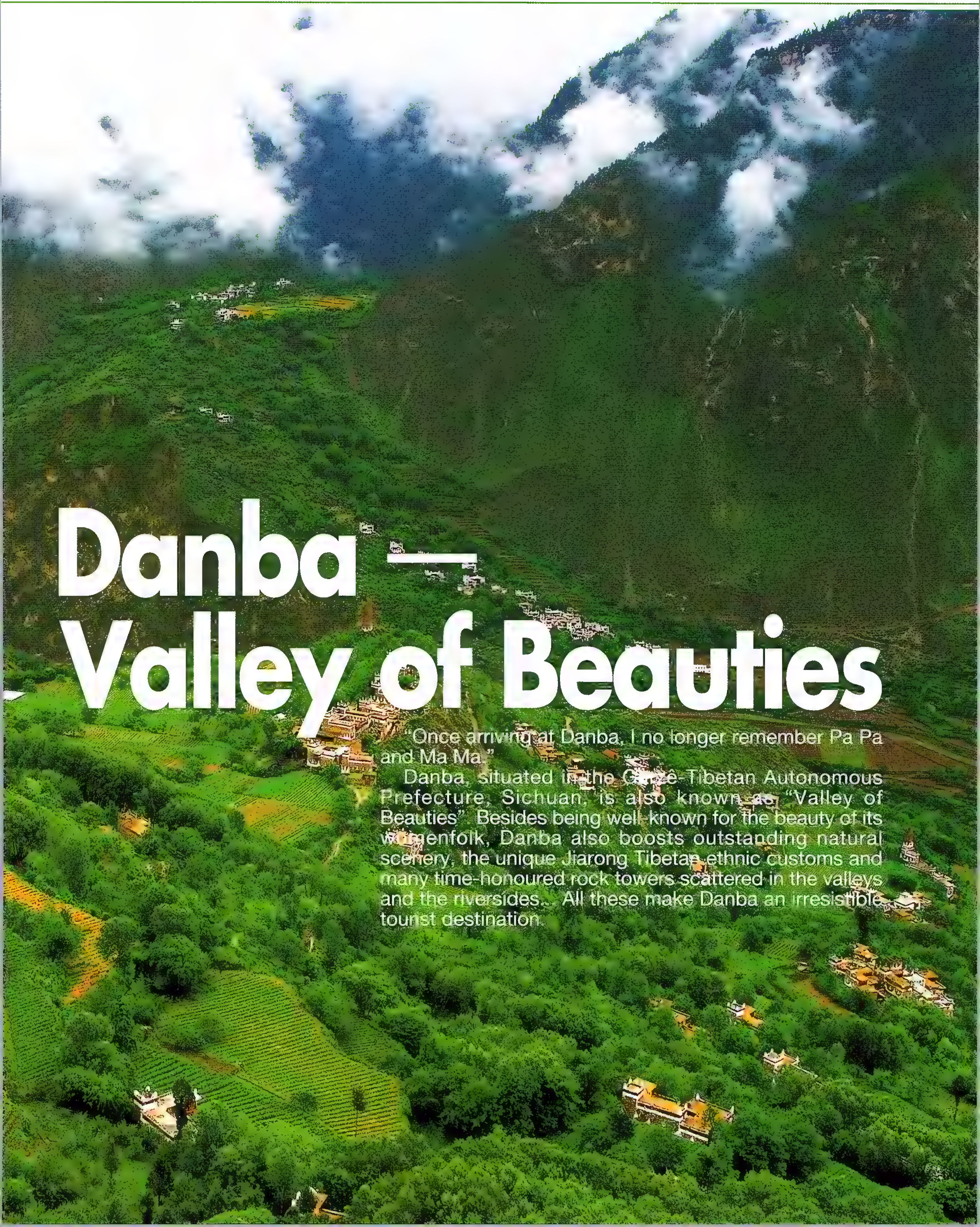
Tong first places the cooked pig's ears on a cutting board. While his left hand gently presses on the ears, he brings down the cleaver in his right, which quickly finds its way beneath his left. And when it next appears, so does a wafer-thin slice of ear meat. Containing an equal share of flesh and bone, the thinnest piece is actually transparent. This meticulous way of cutting is called *pi*. Small as a pig's ear may seem, it can be carved into 15x6-centimetre pieces-an amazing feat for any chef.

For more than a decade, Tong made a living repairing clocks and watches, becoming quite famous in the trade. However, the economic depression of the 80s forced him into the restaurant business. One day, he chanced upon a TV show about making Dengying Beef (a dish in which the beef is carved into slices so thin that light can penetrate them, like a lampshade). He decided the technique could be applied to other dishes as well and soon adapted the Dengying Beef technique to pig's ears, shaving them as thin as cicada wings. His reputation soon spread and it didn't take long for the dish to become wildly popular. By 1990, Tong had become one of the most talked-about chefs in the region and people started calling him "Tong Erduo".

The restaurant can now hold up to 500 patrons and employs more than 30 people. People are known to travel from Xichang or Panzhihua to savour Tong's ears. In 1997, "Tong Erduo" was elected a local specialty of Dechang. In 2003, Tong received an award from the Dechang government for his achievement. Tong has since passed the business on to his brother-in-law, ushering in a new generation of "Tong Erduo". Despite his physical limitations, Tong has shown how far dogged perseverance can take us. His delectable pig's ears have earned him fame in Dechang, Panxi and beyond!

1. Dexterity is the key to slicing a good piece of pig's ear
2. "Tong's Ears" are as thin as cicada wings — a remarkable feat
3. A succulent, silky piece of "Tong's Ear"
4. Besides the "Tong's Ears", the restaurant also features steamed marinated dishes

The scattered, untroubled Tibetan villages (by Zhou Xiaolin)



Danba — Valley of Beauties

"Once arriving at Danba, I no longer remember Pa Pa and Ma Ma."

Danba, situated in the Garzê-Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, is also known as "Valley of Beauties". Besides being well-known for the beauty of its womenfolk, Danba also boosts outstanding natural scenery, the unique Jiarong Tibetan ethnic customs and many time-honoured rock towers scattered in the valleys and the riversides... All these make Danba an irresistible tourist destination.

Spectacular snow-capped mountains and gorges (by Zhou Xiaolin)

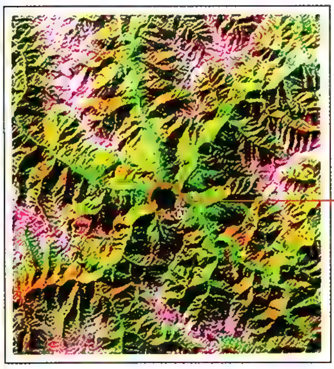
About Danba

Article by Deng Tingliang

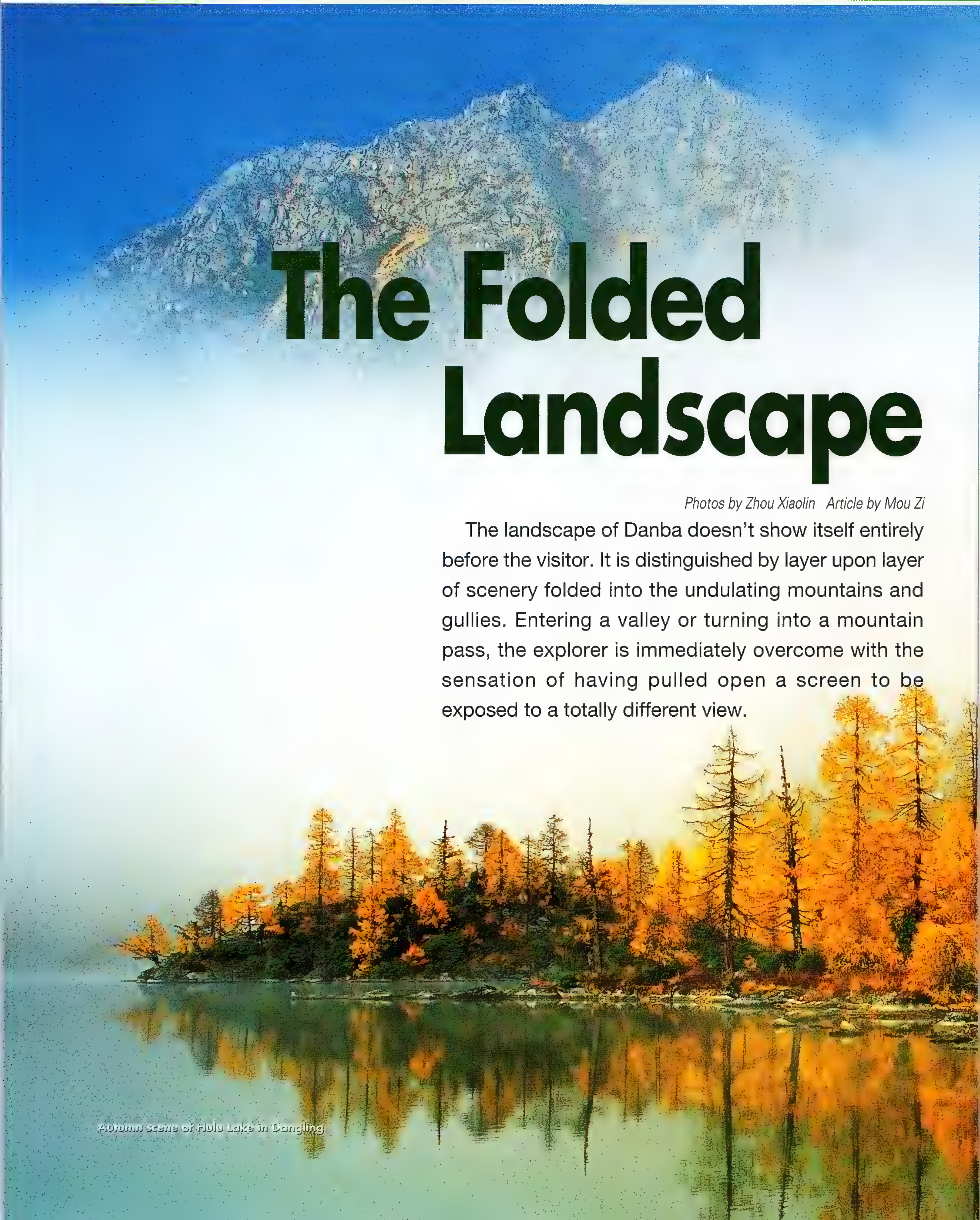
Danba is deeply embedded in a valley of the Minshan mountain range in western Sichuan. Zhangguzhen, the county seat, is where four rivers—Dajinhe (Greater Golden River), Xiaojinhe (Lesser Golden River), Dongguhe (Yak River) and Geshizha River—meet to become the Dadu River that flows further south. From the satellite image, we can see clearly the landscape described above. Five ancient tracks also evolved from these rivers and radiate out from Zhangguzhen.

Flanked by the Greater and Lesser Golden River valleys, the Jiamo Mo'erduo Holy Mountain is the most marvelous peak in the area. According to legend, the Himalayas Holy Mountain once called a meeting of 99,999 mountains to discuss the ranking of each holy mountain. After 49 days of scriptural debates and 81 days of combat contests, Jiamo Mo'erduo won and became "king of all mountains". The main peak of Mo'erduo, located where the Greater and Lesser Golden Rivers intersect, stands at an altitude of 5,000-plus metres above sea level. At dawn or dusk, sunlight reflecting off the unique geological makeup of the mountain adds an even more glorious element to the deity mountain.

Ever since ancient times Danba has acted as a convergent point for various farming tribes as well as the Tibetan and Han ethnic groups and thus been a centre for cultural exchange and cross border trade. It also lies on a military route and is a melting pot of ethnic groups forming unique cultures and customs. In the Tang Dynasty (618—907), the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo united Tibet, and Danba became a territory of Tibet. Under the constant influence of Tibetan culture, Buddhism eventually became the religion of the tribes in the area. With large-scale migration and the military occupation of Tibet, the people of the area were assimilated into the Tibetan ethnic group known as "Rongba" (people of farming area). Since Jiamo Mo'erduo Mountain is situated in the area, the ethnic group is also known as the "Jiarong Tibetan ethnic group" named after the first syllable from 'Jiamo' and 'Rongba'.



Satellite image shows four river branches intersect in Zhanggu Town to form the Dadu River



The Folded Landscape

Photos by Zhou Xiaolin Article by Mou Zi

The landscape of Danba doesn't show itself entirely before the visitor. It is distinguished by layer upon layer of scenery folded into the undulating mountains and gullies. Entering a valley or turning into a mountain pass, the explorer is immediately overcome with the sensation of having pulled open a screen to be exposed to a totally different view.

Autumn scene of Hulu Lake in Dangling

Maoniu River—A Natural Bonsai

After crossing the Xihe Bridge, we drove westward along the Maoniu (Yak) River for about 20 km before arriving at Shachonggou. The Doushuiyan Gorge came into view after we passed the ravine.

Driving along, the road seemed to wind through a green maze. One after another Tibetan villages gradually revealed themselves from behind those small hills.

On the other side of the clear Maoniu River, an ancient watchtower stands on a low hill. Behind the hill an open valley stretches out under the blue sky. Someone suggested it was the ruins of the Ancient Maoniu Kingdom. It did look like that when viewed from across the water.

The road uphill runs through a thick primitive forest. Coming out of the forest, we saw a marshland shaped like a human palm.

The Maoniu River valley boasts a large number of grotesque peaks, forests, lakes and hot springs. Lotus Hill, Peach Hill, Lion Hill and others appear one after another along the route. Each is named for the shape it mimics. The fantastic scenery has won the river valley the title of "natural bonsai" for its resemblance to the charming potted trees and plants of its namesake, but on a much larger scale.

Arriving at Reshuitang (Hot Water Pond), a natural hot spring, we saw that the water on the other side of the Maoniu River was shrouded in mist. The hot springs here are well known among local Tibetans. According to another legend, a beautiful princess was suddenly covered in sores. They itched badly and the princess suffered greatly. But no doctor could cure her affliction. The king was very worried about his daughter. Finally, he put up a notice promising to marry his daughter off to whoever cured her disease. A hunter responded, saying he could save her. He took the princess to Hot Water Pond and asked her to bathe in the water. Then he left. The princess soaked herself in the water as instructed. Surprisingly, the sores faded and she felt better and more relaxed. After taking three such baths, the princess totally recovered. Not willing to marry his noble princess to a hunter, the king attempted to go back on his word. But the princess had already fallen in love with the hunter and they ran away together. They were said to live near the Hot Water Pond and were often seen bathing in the spring water.

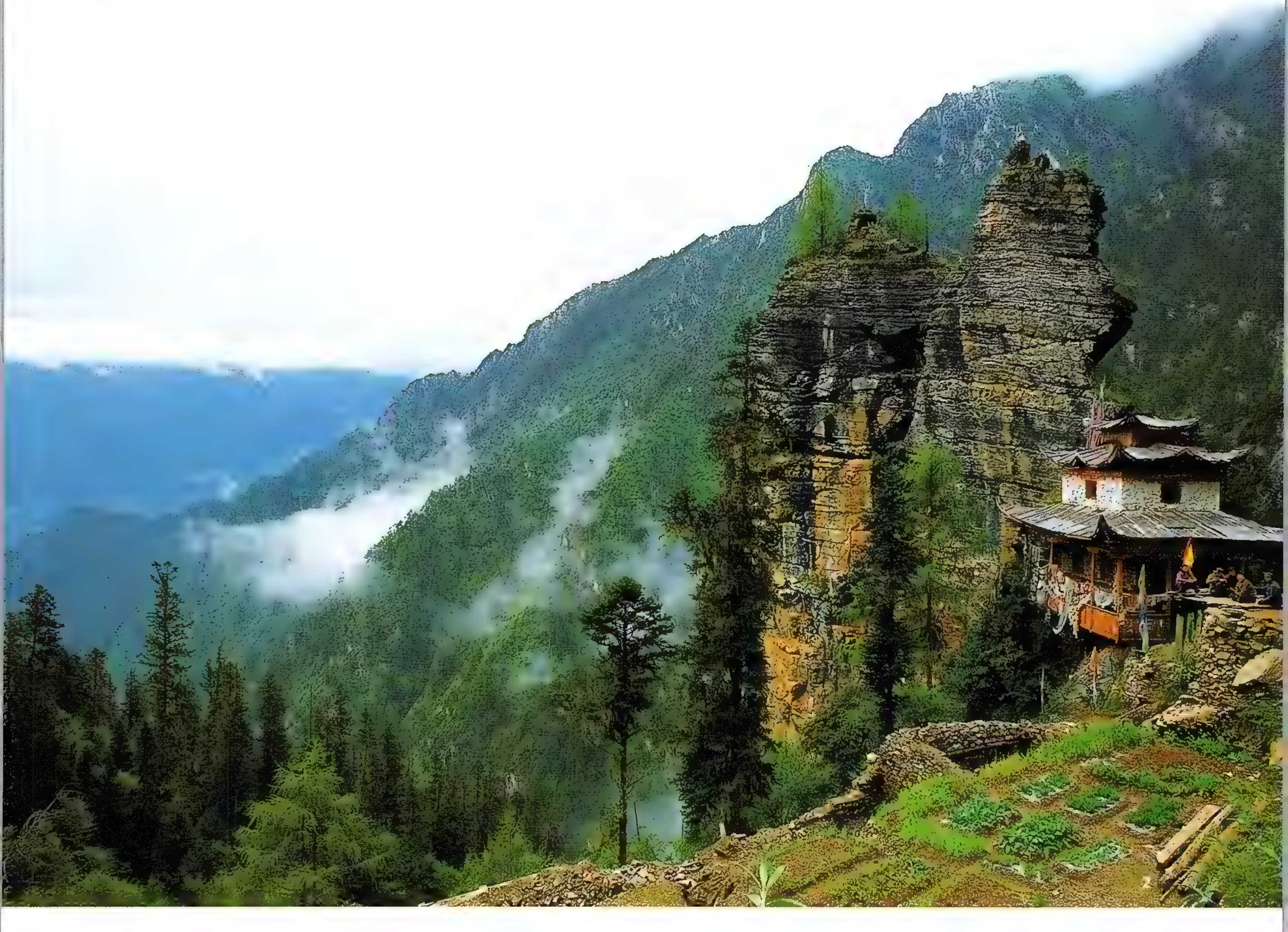
A row of eight springs lines the Maoniu riverbank, like eight glistening pearls inlaid in this natural bonsai. The temperatures of the spring water pools range between 30~80 °C. The hottest spring can boil eggs. Visitors can bathe in the spring appropriate to their needs.

1. In early October, Dangling is turned into a colourful world (by Duoji Pengcuo)
2. Naturally formed rocky Buddhist pagodas is a magic scene on Mo'erduo Holy Mountain

Zho Yumco—A Cool World

As we headed west, the scenery along the Geshezha River featured Tibetan countryside views, high mountains, waterfalls, and oddly shaped peaks, comparing well with the Liniu River scenery. Via Dandong, we came to the source of the Kelu River—Zho Yumco. Blue water rushes down in torrents through the lake's mouth, reminding people of the waterfall at the mouth of Tianchi (Heavenly Lake) on Changbai Mountain. Situated amid high mountains, the lake is surrounded by primitive forests. The water is clear and clean, totally free of pollution. In summer the lakeside is a blaze of colour from azaleas in full bloom. From time to time, wild birds brush over the water, creating yet another beautiful snapshot of nature.

Below Zho Yumco, Hulu Lake features a strip of land stretching out into its centre to an islet covered with towering ancient trees. Standing on the islet and looking at the dark blue dragon spruce forests and the snow-capped peaks across the water, I suddenly felt I was part of this picturesque world of mountains, water and forest.



Dangling boasts vast stretches of grassland. In summer, with flowers blooming all around, horseback riding across the grassy fields proves a pleasant way to enjoy the scenery.

In addition to forests, lakes, snowy mountains and grassland, Dangling also has hot springs. Anyone can have a soak in a natural hot spring here. The spring water actually contains many minerals that are helpful in the treatment of various diseases and beneficial to health in general.

Moska Cattle Farm—A Natural Park

Vast stretches of forests and grasslands can be found at the Moska Cattle Farm. Far from the hubbub of city life, the verdant park appears seamlessly joined to the blue sky.

The area's natural ecology is well preserved here. You can even spot such rare animals as the white-lipped deer, snow leopard, golden eagle, band-tailed fish eagle and griffon vulture, all of which are state Class A protected. The farm is also home to many animals under state Class B protection, including the Tibetan stump-tailed macaque, rhesus monkey, jackal and musk deer, as well as animals protected at the provincial level, such as the white-eared pheasant and Tibetan sand fox.

The Himalayan marmot, also called "snow pig" by local people, is a grassland animal with a

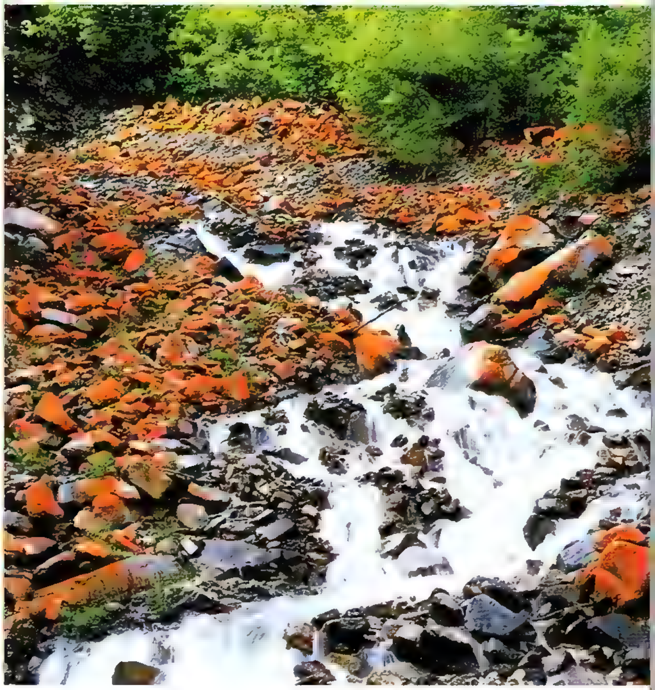
high breeding rate. But they are also captured easily. As a result, they are seldom seen on the grasslands now. However, there are plenty of them on the Moska Cattle Farm since local residents neither kill wild animals themselves nor allow others to hunt on the farm. The marmots are often seen playing by Jinlong (Golden Dragon) Temple. They are on good terms with visitors, enjoying the food they receive from the latter.

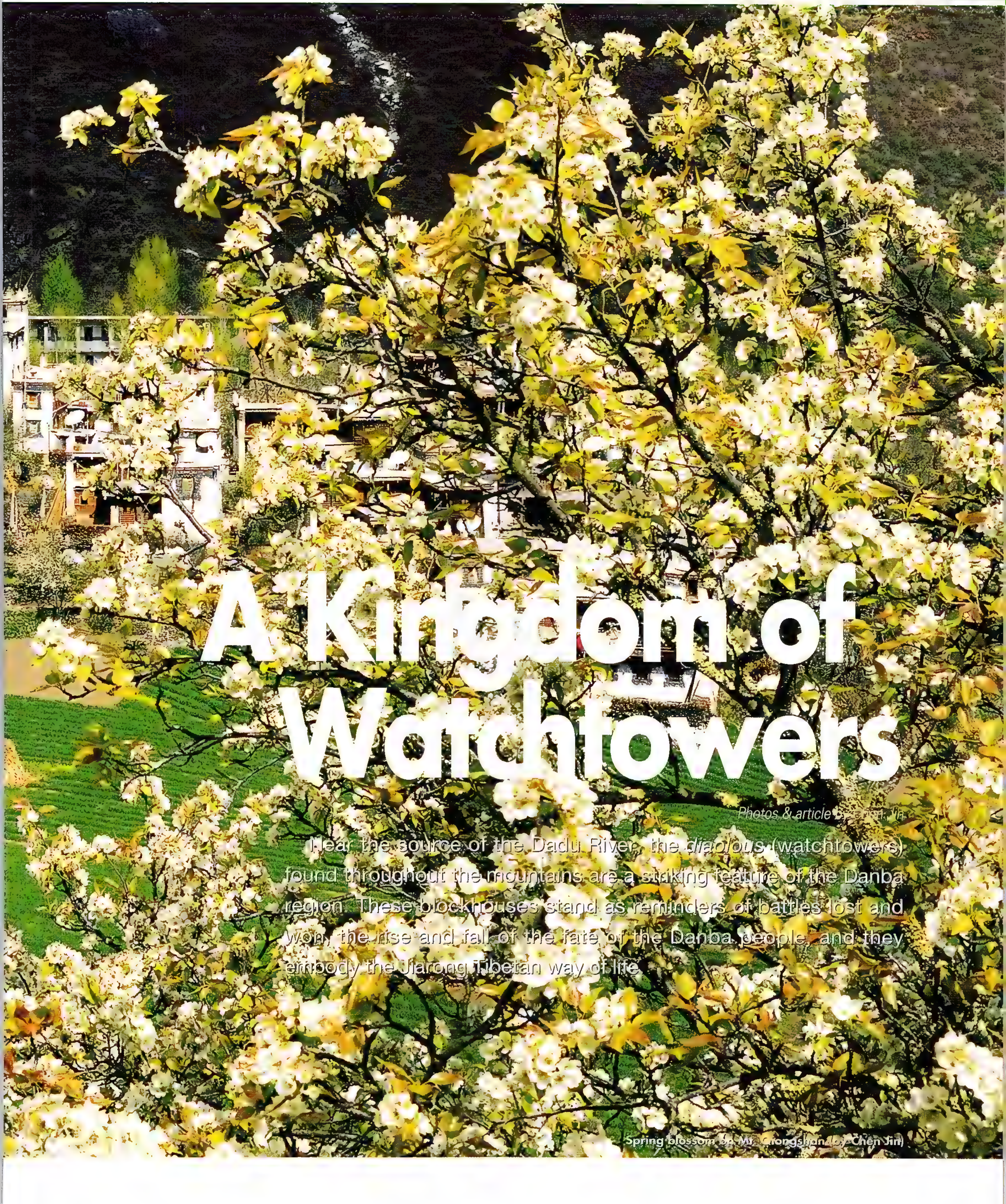
Jinlong Temple is the centre of religious activity for local residents of the farm. The homes of herdsmen and their families surround the temple, forming a “miniature city” on the vast grassland. Moska is also a noted place of cultural interest for the stone images of King Gesar. The discovery of these stone carvings, about 150 pieces in all, was the first of its kind and caused a sensation in academic circles. They have attracted swarms of specialists, scholars, pilgrims and tourists to Moska.

It’s easy to imagine what making friends with the simple, honest Moska people would be like, enjoying the poetic ambience recorded in the Epic of King Gesar and getting back to nature on the grassy fields that are much as they were in primeval times.

Horseback riding is the ideal way to travel around Moska, just another unique experience on the limitless grassland.

1 & 2. There are 10-more lakes in Dangling Scenic Area, each of them is as beautiful as a water-painting work.
3. A magnificent sight of Red Pebbles Beach found in Yak River, a place known as "natural bonsai"



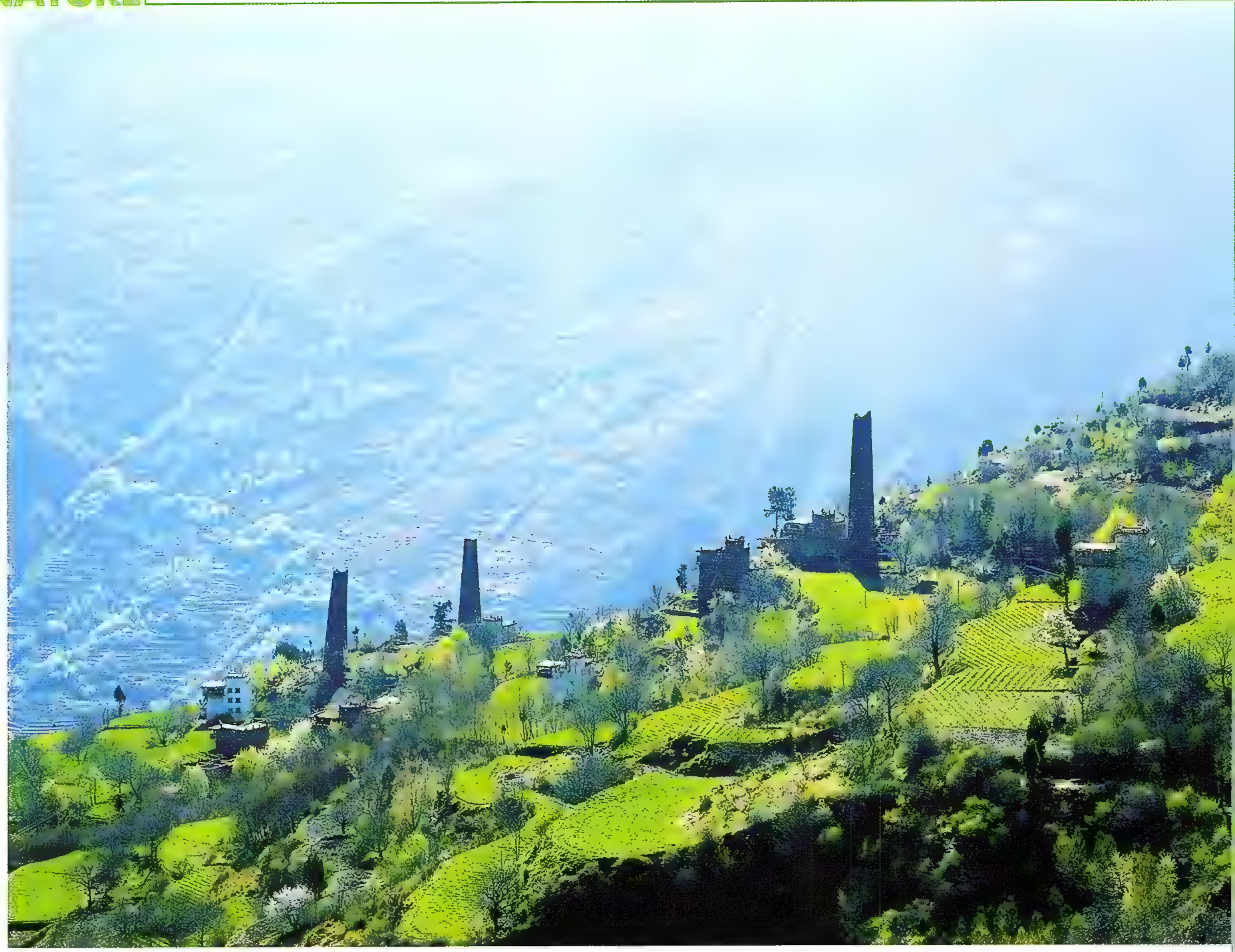


A Kingdom of Watchtowers

Photos & article by Chen Jin

Near the source of the Dadu River, the *diaolous* (watchtowers) found throughout the mountains are a striking feature of the Danba region. These blockhouses stand as reminders of battles lost and won, the rise and fall of the fate of the Danba people, and they embody the Jiarong Tibetan way of life.

Spring blossom on Mt. Qiongshan (by Chen Jin)



I first visited Danba in 1983. When I stood before one of the half tower-half castle-like structures, which the locals called *diaolou*, it was a moment that shook me to the core.

Then between the autumn of 2004 and spring of 2005, I made three trips to Danba, accompanied by Yixi Sangdan, the Curator of the Danba Culture Hall, who filled me in on the history of Danba's Jiarong Tibetans and the *diaolou*. We stood on the terrace of his house, our backs to the constantly changing Mo'erduo, facing Xiongshi (Male Lion) Peak of Mt. Ribalong and Mt. Mori. The time was late autumn; the birches, poplars and chaste trees drenched the mountain in a sea of golden leaves. Chimney smoke wafted gently up from the Tibetan villages hidden in the mountains, and the rock towers of all sizes and shapes seemed particularly solemn against the sunset.

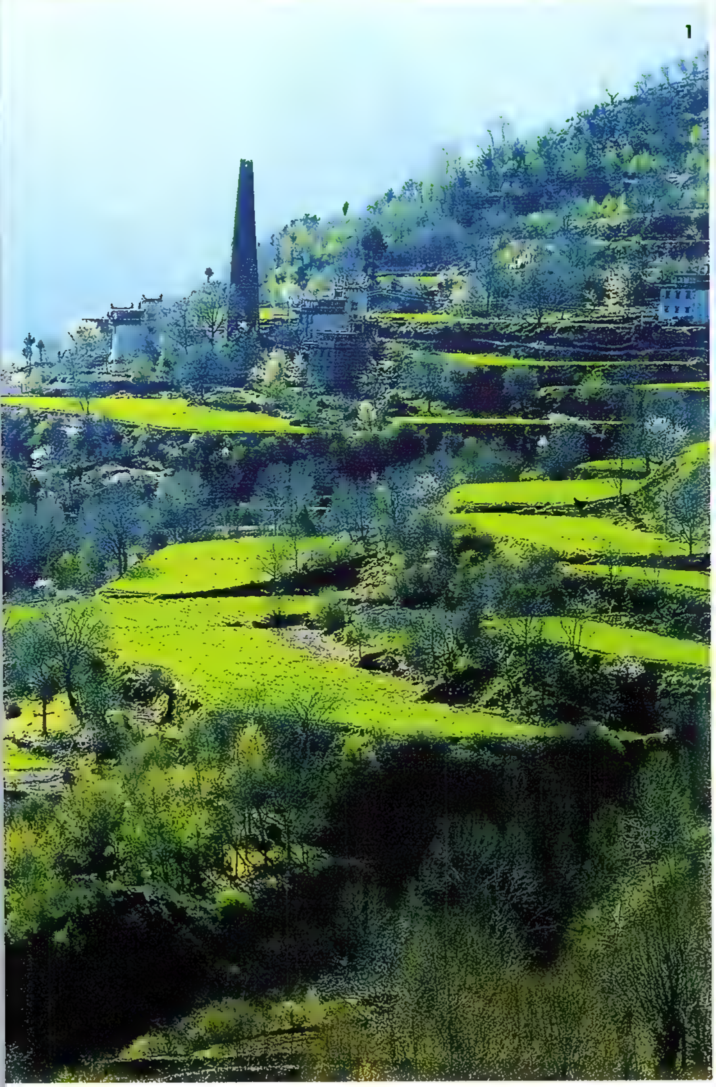
Heyday of the Diaolou

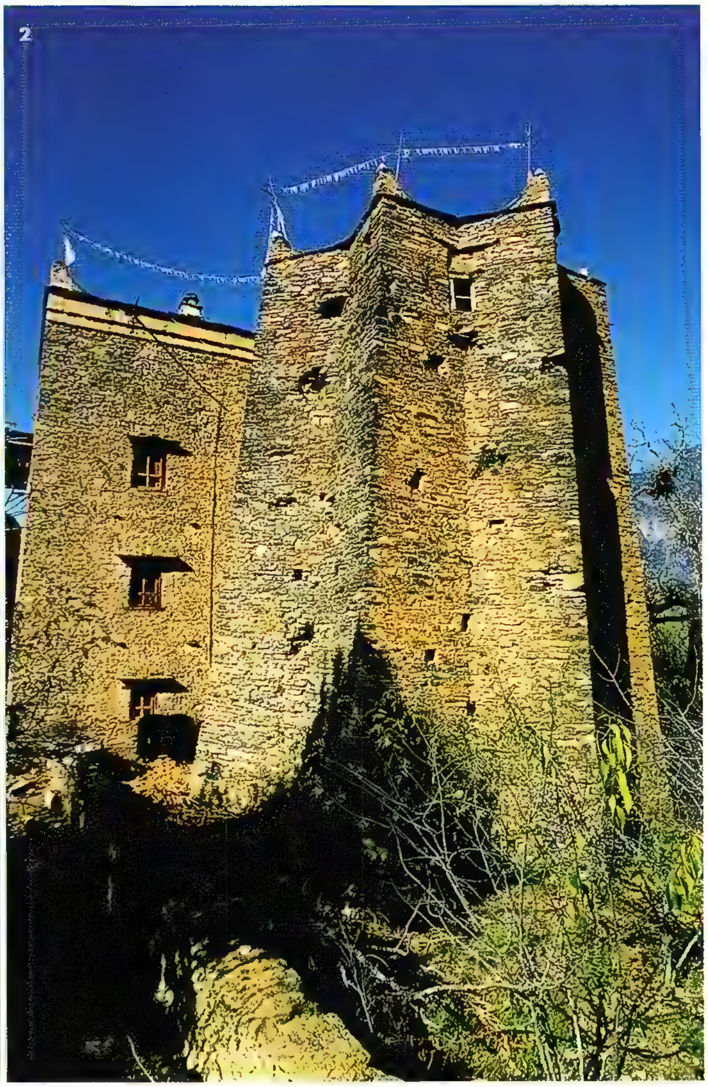
According to Sangdan's research, *diaolous* are found in each of the 15 towns within Danba County. Today, 562 remain, but in the Ming and Qing dynasties when the structures were at their peak, Danba boasted more than 3, 000 rock towers, while the Jinchuan region alone contained 10,000!

Rock blockhouses are mainly found in the Tibetan and Qiang areas of West China, the core being in Shannan Prefecture of Tibet, Jiarong Prefecture of Sichuan Province and areas upstream of the Minjiang River where the Qiang ethnic group live. The greatest number is found in Danba County in Jiarong.

As early as the late New Stone Age, around 2, 000 to 5,000 years ago, the indigenous residents here already had a thriving culture, and their "stone-laid building" techniques were quite advanced.

The Jiarong Tibetans of this area make a living as herdsmen and farmers. The upstream areas of what is known today as the Dadu River comprised the famous "Tibetan and Yi ethnicity migratory corridor" of yore, where numerous ethnic groups fought for their farmland and survival. Hence, the *diaolou*, or watchtowers, were devised and





1 & 2. The watchtowers in Danba serve both defensive and communal functions. Their design vary from four- to thirteen-cornered. Picture no. 2 shows an octagonal-cornered watchtower in Zhonglu Township (by Chen Jin)

became ideal dwelling places in times of peace or battle.

Defensive Function

Judging from the great number of *diaolous* and the function they served in armed conflicts, the region's past must have been a bloody one. In fact, the history of the *diaolou* is an epic tale of war. The most widely told war stories are probably those about Emperor Qianlong's attempts to conquer the Jinchuan area.

The Dadu River is a major branch of the Minjiang River of the Yangtze River. Dadu River is a combination of four rivers, among which the Dajinchuan River and Xiaojing River are the main sources of the Dadu, which were known as the "Greater and Lesser Jinchuan" (Golden Streams). Therefore, the area where they flow is called the

Qing Dynasty Wars on Jinchuan

According to historical records, during Qing Emperor Qianlong's reign, two lengthy armed conflicts took place on the Greater and Lesser Jinchuan (Golden Streams): the first was the "War of Wu Chen", which lasted from 1747-1749, followed by the "War of Xin Mao" from 1771—1776.

The first war started because Shaluoben, the patriarch (or tusi) of the Greater Jinchuan area wanted to increase his territory by taking control of neighbouring villages. Emperor Qianlong sent two generals to battle the tusi, but both attacks failed. Finally he sent Scholar Fu Heng, who changed military tactics based on the past two failures and defeated Shaluoben. The war cost more than 2,000 taels of silver and took the lives of 75,000 soldiers.

The second war was also sparked by territorial disputes between the Greater Jinchuan tusi Suonuomu and the Lesser Jinchuan tusi Zenggesang. Over 200,000 soldiers perished in this war, and 7,000 taels of silver were spent during the campaign.

Jinchuan region, which includes a large part of Danba.

Thirteen-cornered Diaolou

The towering *diaolous* that have withstood the tests of time could not have survived if not for their excellent architectural design and workmanship. The materials were all natural—stones, sticky clay and lumber. The workmen laid stones from the inside working outward. They had no tools to test whether the external wall was level, but relied on their eyesight to judge their work. Every 1.5 metres or so, a strip of wood was placed between the stones to strengthen the wall and prevent future cracks. Clay was then smeared between the large stone blocks to hold the structure together, with any cracks being filled with small rocks. At the corners, long bulky stones were used to ensure the wall's ability to withstand great pressure. These structures are very sturdily built and have stood for hundreds of years.

It took months, even years and sometimes more than a decade to build a watchtower. The towers take many different shapes: rectangular, pentagonal, hexagonal, octagonal, dodecagonal and thirteen-cornered. The more angles in a *diaolou*, the more sophisticated the artistry and workmanship, and the more difficult it is to build. It's said that only three thirteen-cornered rock towers were constructed in the entire Tibetan and Qiang region. Danba was home to two of them: one on top of Pujiaoding, the other atop Changnashan Mountain. The ravages of age have destroyed two of the three. The only survivor is the tower at Pujiaoding.

Pujiaoding is strikingly positioned in a place of great scenic beauty: with the Siya Holy Mountain at its back, it faces the Dadu River opposite the rock tower groups of Suopo. From the north one can see Mo'erduo Holy Mountain. A snaking narrow path leads to Pujiaoding,

complete with hairpin turns that only a small vehicle with a short wheelbase, such as a Beijing 212 jeep, can easily manoeuvre. After more than an hour's rocky ride, we reached our destination of Heijing Temple in Daping Village. Standing at Heijing Temple, we could vaguely make out the shape of the thirteen-cornered *diaolou* in the distance. To get a closer look, we had to climb the mountain for more than an hour on our hands and knees. A look at my altitude metre revealed that the base of the thirteen-cornered *diaolou* was 2, 975 metres above sea level.

1. The thirteen-cornered watchtower in Pujiaoding is the most revered among its type (by Chen Jin)
2. Winter scene of a Tibetan village (by Zhou Xiaolin)
3. The hairpin turns opposite to the Tibetan villages in Pujiaoding (by Zhou Xiaolin)

2

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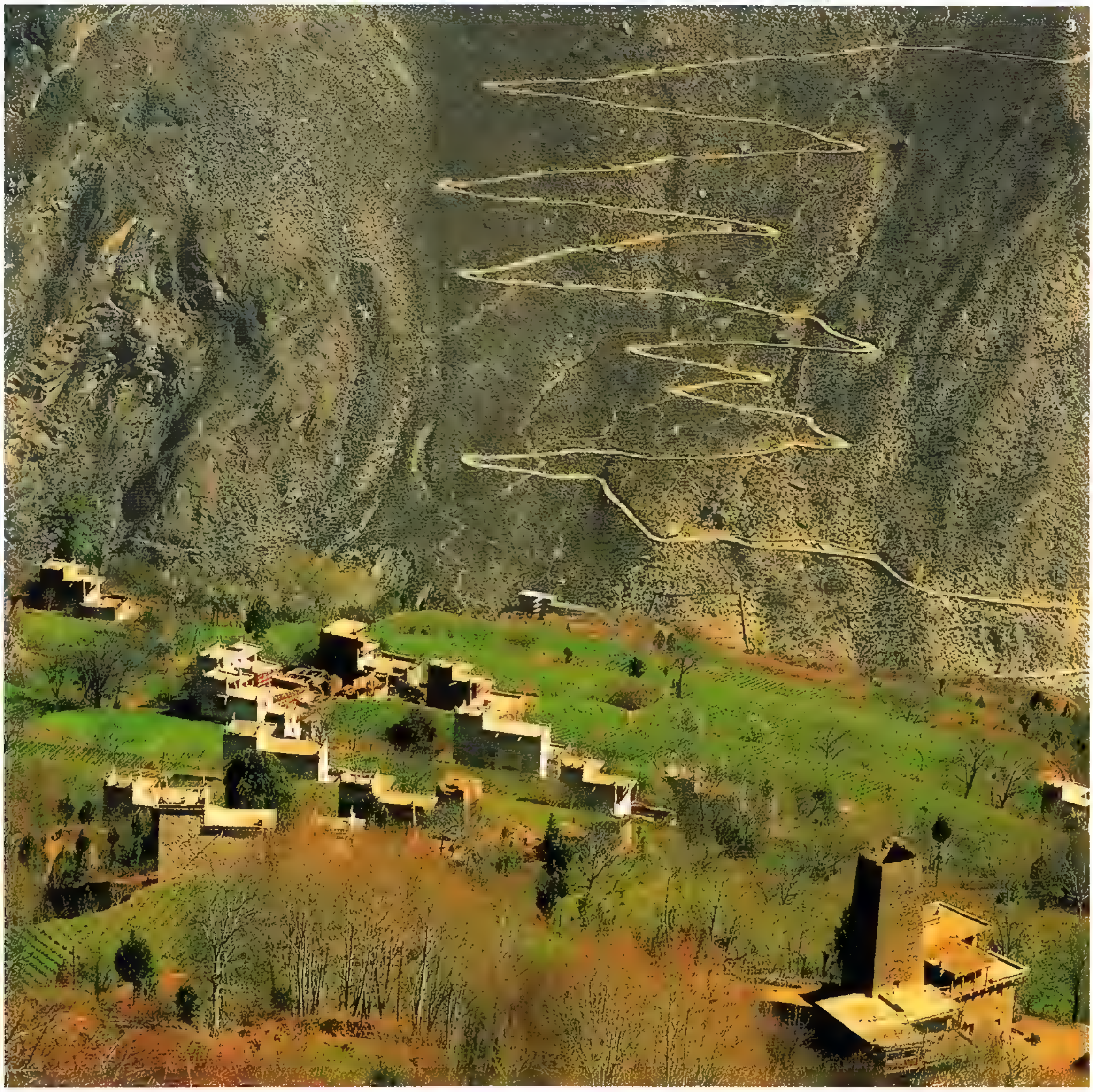
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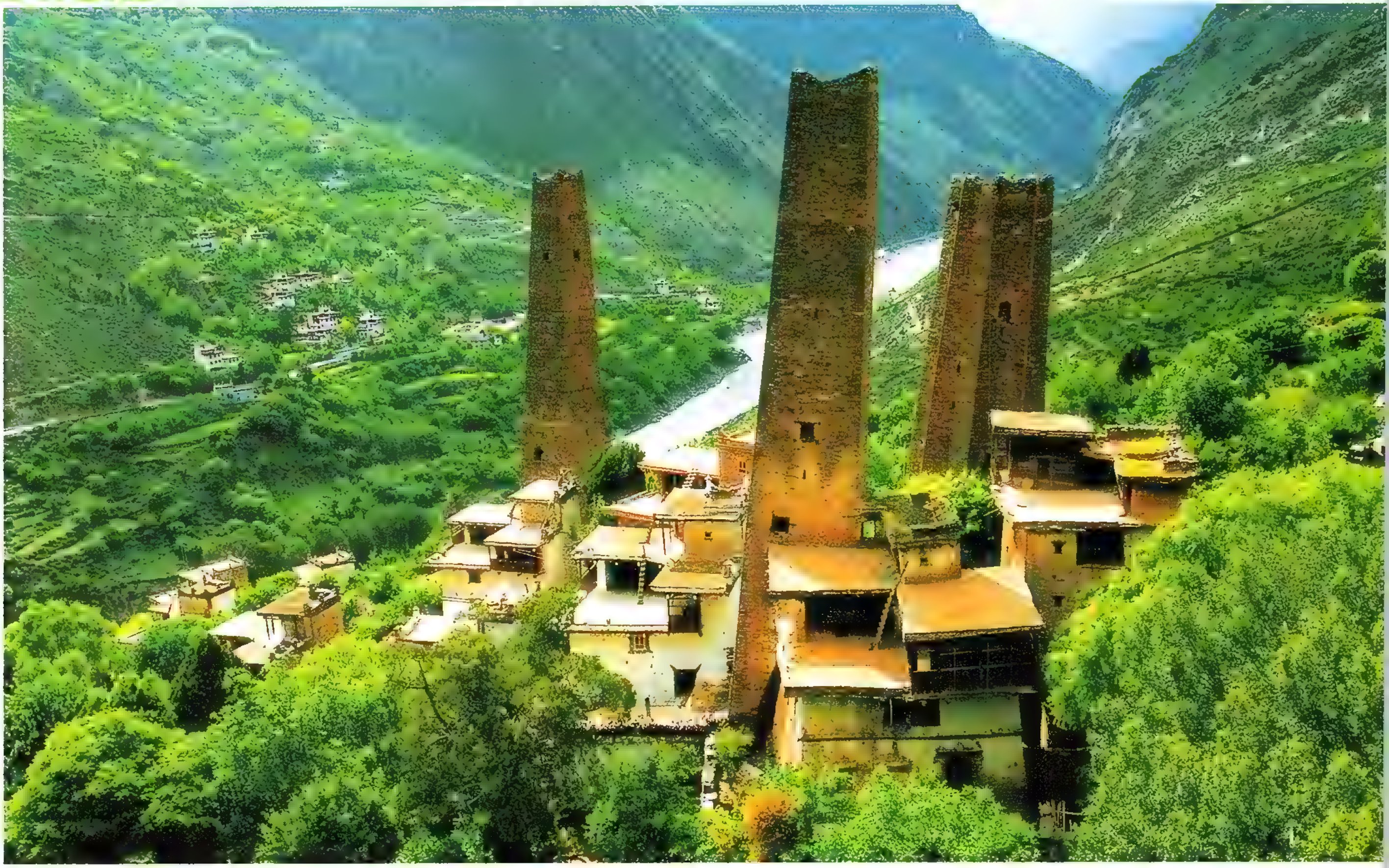


A thirteen-cornered *diaolou* is perhaps the most revered of its kind, like the number 13 itself—to westerners it may be unlucky, but to the Jiarong Tibetans the number symbolises supreme power and has a sacred religious meaning. There used to be a folk dance called the "Dance of 13 Warriors" in the Jiarong region. These 13 warriors were seen as the protectors of Jiarong, and people worshipped by performing the dance and by building the thirteen-cornered *diaolou*.

While we were observing the thirteen-cornered *diaolou*, we noticed that the side against the mountain had almost collapsed. A victim of gravity, from the side it leaned at quite a pronounced angle. It seemed that a gale could topple the crumbling edifice. Though no gales were blowing, a light snow began to fall and a white mist drifted in close from the west, draping itself around the entire group of rock towers as if it were a pure white Hada scarf of the Tibetans. The sombre towers stood in stark contrast to the ethereal beauty of the engulfing mist. We snapped away at this scene. Worrying that we might never see the thirteen-cornered *diaolou* again, we wanted to capture history and this moment of incredible beauty.

Throughout Danba's history, every household built *diaolou*. If someone didn't have one, or if it wasn't tall enough, they'd have difficulty finding a wife. That's because the *diaolou*, apart from their original purpose of providing housing and shelter from invaders, came to represent skill and wealth.

Communal Functions

There are two types of *diaolous*: those for living in and those shared by the village. The residential *diaolous* were built next to one's house, or even connected to the house (called an "in-house *diaolou*"). Due to financial and physical constraints, the blockhouses connected to ordinary households weren't very tall. They were used for storage, to keep thieves and enemies at bay, or as defense posts in major battles. Village *diaolous*, in contrast, served the common purposes of the village.

The Tibetans are very religious. Most Tibetan families have a shrine at home to worship the Buddha. As most Jiarong Tibetans of Danba worship in the *diaolous* connected to their homes, their towers are also known as "prayer *diaolou*".

After Emperor Qianlong conquered Jinchuan in the mid-Qing Dynasty, the number of *diaolous* steadily diminished. In Danba's history, there were more than 3,000 *diaolous* at one point. The fact that 562 of them are still extant (as of 2002) is rather fortunate. In the 1950s, Zhonglu Township was said as a "forest of soaring watchtowers". There were many more than the 81 blockhouses that remain there today. The tallest ancient *diaolou* still standing is 43.08 metres; centuries ago it would have been considered tall among the more common squat *diaolous*.

Causes of the Diaolous' Decline

Three main culprits are responsible for the sudden decline of Danba's *diaolous*:

1) Warfare. Emperor Qianlong's attacks on Jinchuan may have been centred on the Greater and Lesser Jinchuan, but the Danba area was not entirely spared damaging conflicts. There were also frequent clashes between tribal kings or villages, all of which contributed to the demise.

2) Forces of nature. In recent times, rock *diaolous*, especially village *diaolous*, have been basically left to the elements. Lack of maintenance has exposed the *diaolous* to the wear and tear of nature —storms, lightning and even earthquakes have led to their collapse.

3) Man. Far more havoc and destruction was wreaked on the *diaolous* by people. Most of the *diaolous* were destroyed at the hands of their inheritors. In the 1960s and 70s, *diaolous* demolition was at its peak.

That day, we stood at the top of the only remaining four-storey octagonal rock tower of Garenyi Village in Zhonglu Township, looking at Mo'erduo Sacred Mountain in the distance and watching the Lesser Golden River snake its way eastward. The entire township stretched out before us, but we couldn't help thinking what a majestic sight it would have been if those long-demolished rock towers were still standing.

Characteristic Tibetan Villages

Article by Chen Ying, Zhu Xiaonan

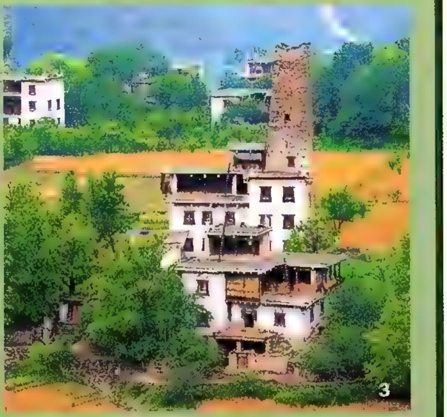
The rock towers of Danba are awe-inspiring structures, but the villages of the local Jiarong Tibetans are equally distinctive.

In Danba, people live in "natural villages" (known as "zhai zi") on the mountain slopes, with their backs to the hillside facing the river. They look to the sun, keeping the wind behind them. The villages consist of houses and diaolous . Due to the mountainous conditions, the open spaces on the slopes are reserved for farming, so houses are built on the hillier areas.

Each village family has their own garden surrounding their home, with apple, pear, pomegranate, walnut and Sichuan pepper trees. Some families choose to build adjacent to one another. Dozens, even hundreds, of households occupy the slopes of the valleys, creating an idyllic living and farming community. These natural villages form without planning, negotiation or arbitration; villagers simply seem to know the best places to build and keep out of each other's way.

What's special about residences in Danba is that most diaolous have a corner structure shaped like a smaller diaolou, usually at the northeast or northwest corner. The mini diaolou extends above the roof, with white stones and prayer flags at the corners. Other rooms are built at the sides.

Tibetan residences serve three functions, regardless of their size: animals are kept in the lower level—forming the base of an agrarian society; people live and interact in the middle level—for practical purposes; the top level is for prayer and worship—a mark of respect to the gods. These residences are a perfect marriage of the spiritual and the practical.



1. Ancient watchtowers in Suopo, an area located aside Dadu River (by Da Jun)
2. Sunning meat in a Jiarong Tibetan blockhouse (by Zhou Xiaolin)
3. A perfect combination of watchtower and rock residence (by Zhou Xiaolin)
4. Colourful furniture seen in a Tibetan family (by Zhang Shu)

Beginning from the 12th day of the winter month in the Jiarong Tibetan calendar, the entire year is marked by a succession of festivals and events bearing the rich cultural flavour of the Jiarong people. Such festivals include the Mo'erduo Mountain Festival held to commemorate the birth of the Mo'erduo Mountain god, the Wine Tasting Festival, the Lantern Festival, and the annual Jiarong Tibetan Festival.

Photos by Zhou Xiaolin, Chen Jin & others   Article by Mo Zi

The Brilliant Jiarong Tibtan

Jiarong Tibetan New Year—A Legacy of Dongnu State

In the local language, Jiarong means "River Vally of the Queen" and Danba, the source of the Dadu River, was once the location of the Dongnuguo (Eastern Women State). A unique feature of the Eastern Women State was that the number 11 holds a special place in their culture. For example, historical records state that the Donghuguo celebrated the New Year in the 11th month and will hold exorcism rituals on the 11th and 12th days. It is said that the entire New Year celebration is designed to commemorate the triumph over the evil spirits and to celebrate the heroic King Gesar.

Three days prior to New Year, the residents will clean their homes thoroughly and on the 12th day will whitewash their homes with white clay. Household supplies are fully stocked up and any family members outside the village are required to return home. Sun, moon and star patterns are painted on the walls of the hut, and patty cakes to

[illegible] (by Zhou Xiaolin)

offer to the gods are made in the shapes of the sun, moon, and stars as well as cows, goats, chickens, pigs, dogs and cats. Tibetan mats are laid in the hut and oil lanterns lit on the hearth and spirit table. In some homes, the Tangka with King Gesar portrait will be hung in the scriptures hall together with oil lanterns and many kinds of offerings.

Before dinner, a prayer is made to King Gesar to protect the family in the New Year by smashing the evil spirits and ensuring a plentiful harvest. At this time, the members of the family beat the gongs, drum or blow through a conch or *suona* (trumpet) to welcome King Gesar, the ancestral gods and other spirits. On this night, everyone must eat until they are full, otherwise it is believed that when King Gesar weighs each member of the family he will be angry at anyone who has not gained weight!

On the 12th night, the villagers light a bonfire to expel the wicked spirits and perform a play about King Gesar conquering the evil ghosts. On the 13th day (the first day of the New Year), there is a competition to see who can wake up first. The men who get up the earliest go up to the second level of their home and fire a gunshot to show they are the first to rise. The man of the house will burn poplar incense in the chimney as an offering to the gods and the women will fetch a kettle of water from the well after making themselves up for the day. With these simple tasks, the Jiarong Tibetan New Year comes to a close.

The Exciting Guozhuang Dance

Danba Tibetans are all experts at singing and dancing, both men and women, young and old. The most common traditional dance is the guozhuang dance. This dance is always performed on commemorative occasions such as weddings, building a new home, temple festivals and any other gathering of people.

To perform the *Guozhuang* dance, men and women form once circle facing the centre. The men take the lead and the women follow behind. The lead dancer on the male side is taken by a man of high-standing in the village who has much experience in dancing and singing. During the rest of the dance, the dancers should follow his lead.

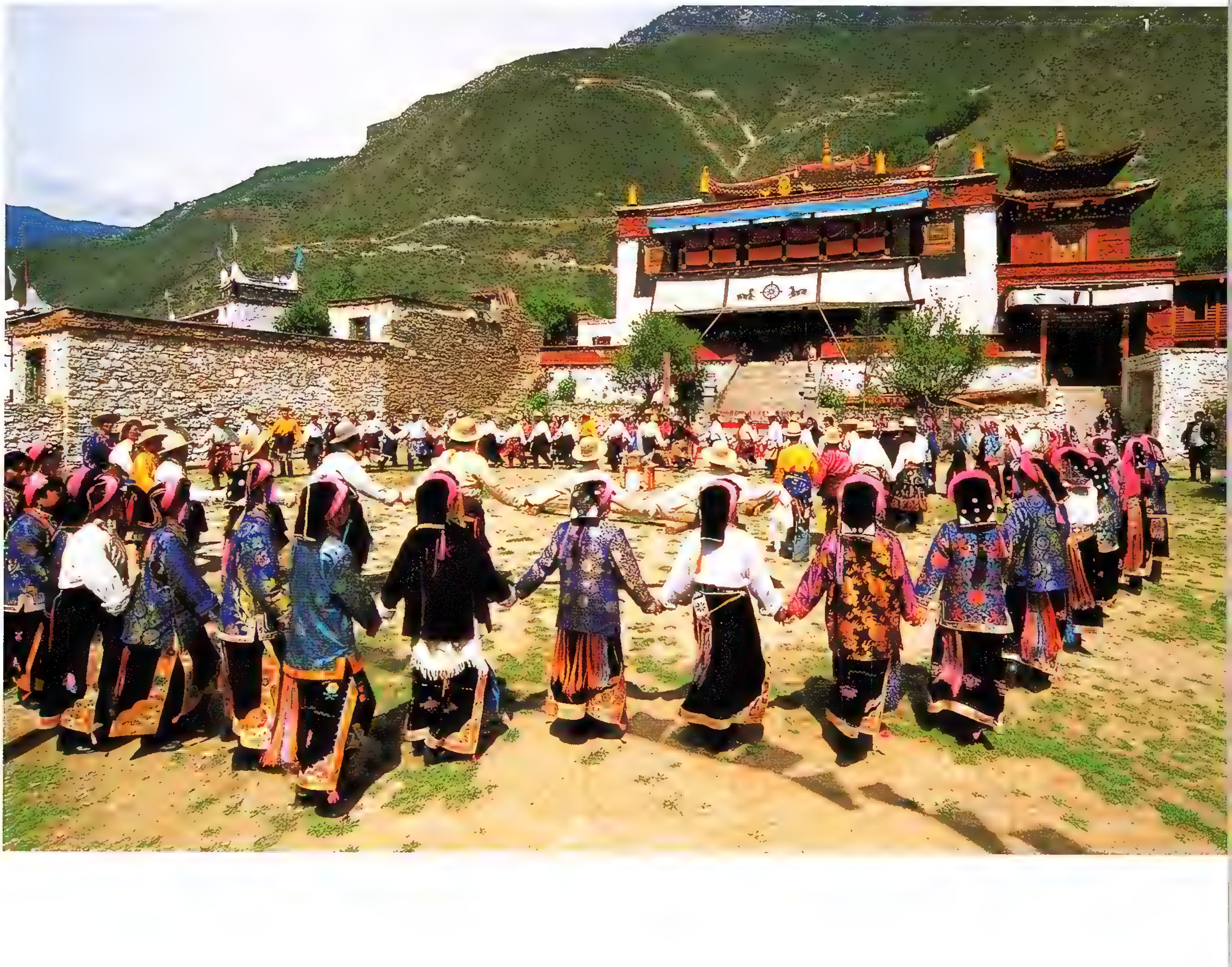
When one round of the dance is finished then a toast ceremony is performed, starting from the respected dance leader in the centre of the clearing. When everyone has taken a mouthful, then the next dance begins. No *Guozhuang* dance can be without wine!

Coming of Age Ceremony

The coming of age ceremony is also a beauty contest and probably originated from the time of the Eastern Women State. Each spring in the third or fourth lunar month, the temple festivals become busiest making the perfect time for the beauty contest. On this day, the girls dress up in their finest clothes and make up, some taking two days to achieve a perfect look.

Two days prior to the contest, the girls are led by their families to a private scriptures hall in a temple. The process of adornment is extremely complex and the number and size of jewels used on the forehead, as well as the girl's dressing, are a measure of a family's wealth and economic foundation. This is the coming of age ceremony. Only unwed girls who are 17 years old or older can dress up in this manner. And the girls will continue to dress up at every annual festival until they are married.

According to Jiarong custom, every girl must go through the three-day guozhuang ritual in



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1. **Whatever the event or size of the event is, Danba people must have the Guozhuang dance (by Zhou Xiaolin)**
2. **All Danba girls must attend the coming of age ceremony when reaching the age of 17 (by Da Jun)**
3. **Home-made wine will always be provided in the centre of the festival site. People can suck the wine with a wheat pipe (by Chen Jin)**

3

order to be considered an adult and of marriageable age. These three days are also the ideal time for marriage proposals to be made. This gathering of young men and women is too good an opportunity for match-making and many marriages are settled during these three days.

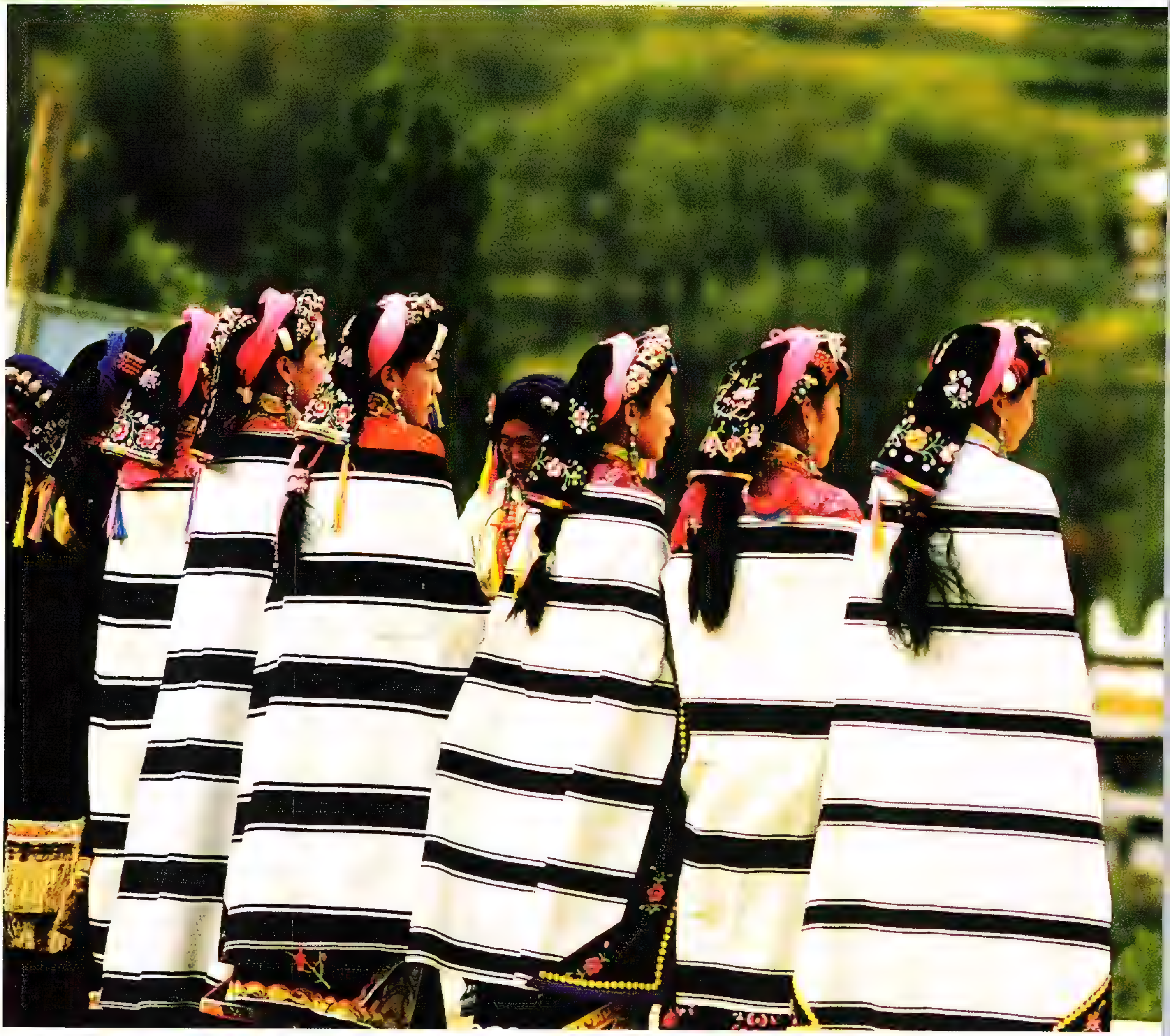
Romancing the Old Fashioned Way

Covering Head with Clothes

Across the world there are many fascinating ways of finding a lover, however the wooing methods of the Danba young men and women have to be among the most curious.

To begin, three or four young men wrap their heads in order to disguise their identities before stumbling over to one of the houses where the girls are staying. The young men open the door, crouch outside the hut and begin singing song after song to the girls inside. The men alter their voices in order to disguise their identities just in case the girls take up kitchen ladles, ash pans or sticks to drive them out if their singing is too awful. If that happens, then the clothing on the head can also protect the young man from physical injury not to mention the humiliation of discovering his identity!

As the men sing downstairs and the girls sing upstairs in duets to each other. When the girls are finally won over by the young men's singing, the men are invited upstairs where they sit opposite the girls, still with the clothing on their heads. The men are served with wine, fruit and snacks, however no matter what happens next—more singing or sweet whisperings down in the fields—the men cannot take a single liberty. Otherwise, the next day his reputation will spread around the village like wildfire and not a singe girl will



pay him another glance.

Stealing the headscarf

Part of the costume of any Danba girl is the headscarf. Brightly decorated with flower designs or patterns, the headscarves combine with the costume's flowing skirts to give an impression of dainty beauty whenever the Danba girls move. When a young lad fixes his eye on a girl, one way to show his interest in her is to steal away her headscarf when she is unaware. The girl will act as if embarrassed and angry, however if she likes the boy in return she will approach him to get the scarf back. The young man will usually lead her to a quiet corner where he can woo her and the two can discuss the details of their engagement.

The Wedding Ceremony

Once a couple has attained permission from both their families, they consult a lama priest to choose the most auspicious day for their wedding.

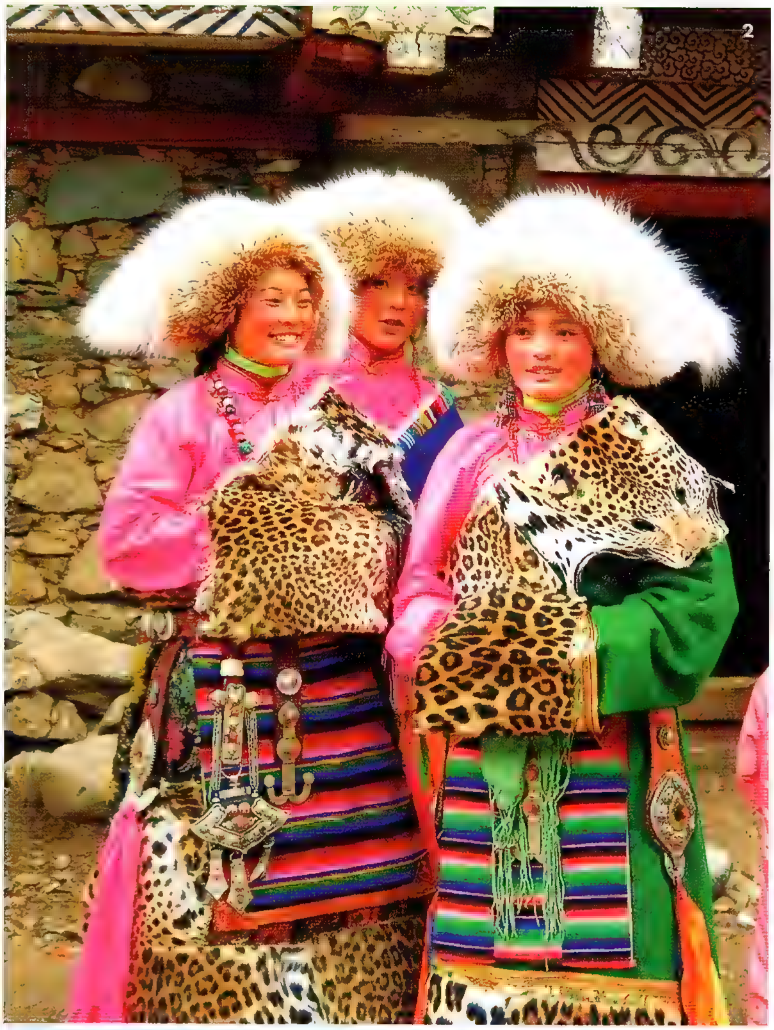
The wedding ceremony is usually presided over by a senior relative; on the women's side it is usually her uncle. The couple also chooses some close friends to act as best man and maid of honour. The dowry is usually considerable and needs 20 to 30 people to transport to the husband's home. Usual items to be found in the dowry presented to the male side include hundreds of skirts and dresses, shawls, scarves and belts to be worn in every season, silver ornaments such as flowers and pendants, coral brooches and necklaces, farm instruments such as a pickaxe and hoe, over a thousand catties of rice (equal to one year's consumption for the bride), some sacks of pastries and vats of wine and so on.

Before the bride leaves her home, her parents will present her with a white hada scarf as their blessing on her marriage. A group of 70 to 80

people who set out at a prearranged time set by the lama or soothsayer and sing mountain songs on their way to the groom's home. Usually it is considered lucky to arrive at the groom's home before nightfall.

The wedding ceremony is held at night and is presided over by the girl's uncle. The elders on both sides make congratulatory speeches. At last, everyone wishes the couple a happy life and present the couple with hada white scarves. With the ceremony over, the crowd lights a bonfire on the plain and sing and dance until dawn.

1. Dignified clothing of Danba girls (by Chen Jin)
2. Danba girls dressed in festive best (by Zhou Xiaolin)
3. The Jiarong Tibetan men like wearing fox skin hat or fur hat and big robe (by Pu Tao)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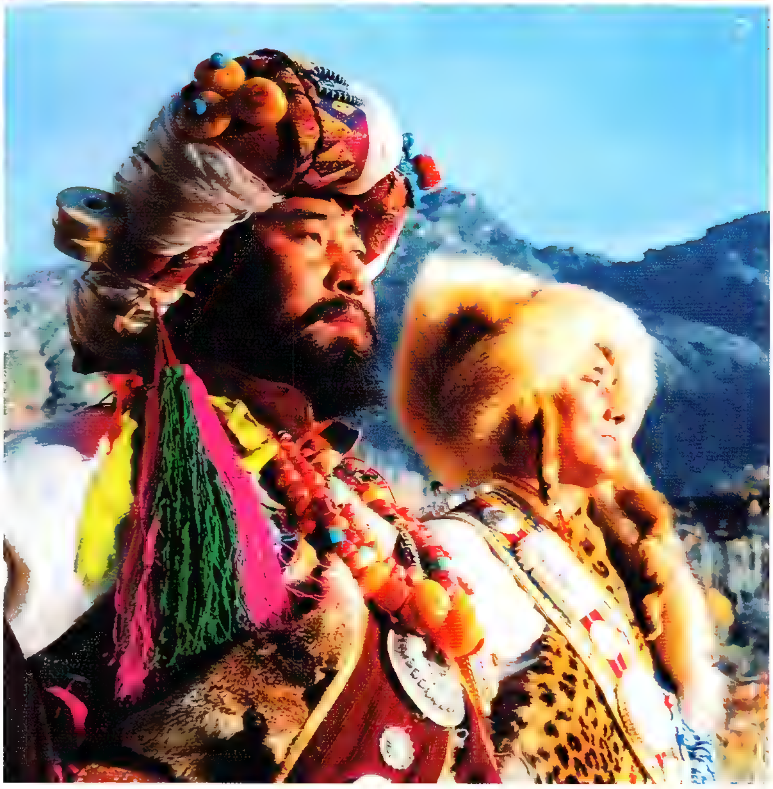

[illegible] Amu, also called Zewang Amu, is one of the [illegible] members of Gao Yuan Hong (Red Plateau) [illegible] group. She was awarded "Silver Flower" at [illegible] Customs Festival in 2001 (by

Beauties by the Dadu River

Photos by Chen Jin, Zhou Xiaolin, Zhu Bin,
Liu Qiankun & others
Article by Liu Xi

Beautiful women are found throughout the world, but it is Danba that has the name "Beauty Valley". Although the name is a product of tourism promoters, the saying "the Danba area gives birth to beautiful girls"has a long history. Some historians even associate the Danba people with the descendents of the royal families of the Western Xia Dynasty (1038—1227).

The women of Danba are born beautiful.

"Beauty Valley" is located in Badi, a township of Danba, but this doesn't mean that women from other areas of Danba are not beautiful. When the pear flowers were blossoming in April, we paid a visit to the Tibetan village of Jiaju. At noon we entered a courtyard where the pear trees had just borne their fruit. We found several girls smiling in a window. Such pleasant and charming smiles reminded me of the most beautiful flowers; all blossoms seemed to pale in comparison.

"Wanna cup of tea?"

Their invitation, spoken in Mandarin, was deeply tinged with Tibetan phrasing. We naturally accepted their hospitality and were served in the courtyard. The girls were preparing dumpling-shaped stuffed buns. They also invited us to lunch with them, treating us to barley beer and ham. As we ate, I found their eyes to be among the most beautiful I had ever seen, free of guile and crystal clear. Eyes such as theirs are seldom seen now in cities.

During our meal, I learned they would soon leave their homes for Guangzhou and Jiuzhaigou (Nine-River Valley). An increasing number of young women have gone to find jobs in other places, prompting another saying, that beauties are no longer seen in Danba except during the

Spring Festival and wedding ceremonies.

According to an older saying, "Danba produced 3,000 beauties." That's true. Danba women are now active in every walk of life, from the Jiuzhaigou Valley Art Ensemble to the song-and-dance nightclubs of Tanggula Wind in Chengdu, for instance.

The 2001 and 2002 winners of the "Kangba Belle" beauty contest were from Danba.

Lu Amu of Badi was one of the top 10 Kangba belles to be honoured during activities to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Garzê Tibet Autonomous Prefecture in 2000. She runs a family inn in Badi now. The mother of two children, she is still delicate and attractive.

Beauty Brings Good Luck

Another beauty, Mu Achu, lives in Sejiao Township four kilometres from Badi. Though unknown to the outside world, she is famous among local residents. The owner of a snack stall, her business fares better than many others. Part of the reason could be her good looks. Travellers and truck drivers often visit her stall, perhaps with other things in mind. They take the opportunity of buying a case of cigarettes or a lighter just to enjoy her beauty close up or to have an idle chat with her. Then they slowly return into the warm sunlight, a satisfied smile on their faces.

A very famous singer with long eyelashes and a permanent smile hails from the nearby village of Bo'er in Camel Valley. The locals call her Muzhi Amu, but she is known as Zewang Amu professionally. She used to be a member of the well-known "Red Plateau" band.

Danba beauties share the following characteristics: distinctive facial contours, a steeply bridged nose, thick lips, and big and radiant eyes that have a brightness and sincerity seldom seen among inland peoples. Manual labour has helped them achieve graceful, gentle figures. Their skin glows with health.

Nowadays city women pay great attention to their complexions. When asked her recipe for skin care, Wangze Amu said with a smile, "The women here are all born beautiful. We're not particular about skin care."

Legendary Stories

Historians know of many nomadic tribes in northwest China before Tubo (Tibet) came into being. They lived and roamed the vast stretches of land.

Prior to Tubo's ascent, the Eastern Women State ruled the Kangba area. In this ancient society of matriarchs, men had no power. With their low social

Some believe that Danba people are of extraction of the royal Western Xia Dynasty, hence their elegant temperament (by Zhu Bin)

Delicate silhouette and pretty dress contribute to the charm of all Danba ladies (by Chen Jin) status, they usually did heavy manual labour. The kingdom's history and territory was without peer anywhere in the world at that time. Su Bi, the ruler, was said to be from Danba. It seems that the idea of Danba producing beautiful women was already established in ancient times. According to historical records, the Eastern Women State neighboured Bailang Qiang in the south, joined Dangxiang Qiang in the east, and bordered on Yazhou in the southeast. Its territory covered to some extent today's eastern Qamdo in Tibet, western Aba prefecture and most of Garzê prefecture in Sichuan. With women in the lead, it seems giving birth to healthy babies and bringing them up soundly was much easier.

Another school of thought associates Danba with the Western Xia Dynasty. In 1227, Mongolian troops conquered the Western Xia court. The imperial kinsmen of Western Xia and their families fled to areas in present-day Danba. As a result, the beauties of Danba inherited the nobility and good looks of the Western Xia empresses and concubines.

1, 2, 3. The beauties of Danba are not unknown to the world any more. Instead, they become a main source of killing photographers' films (by Zhou Xiaolin, Chen Jin)

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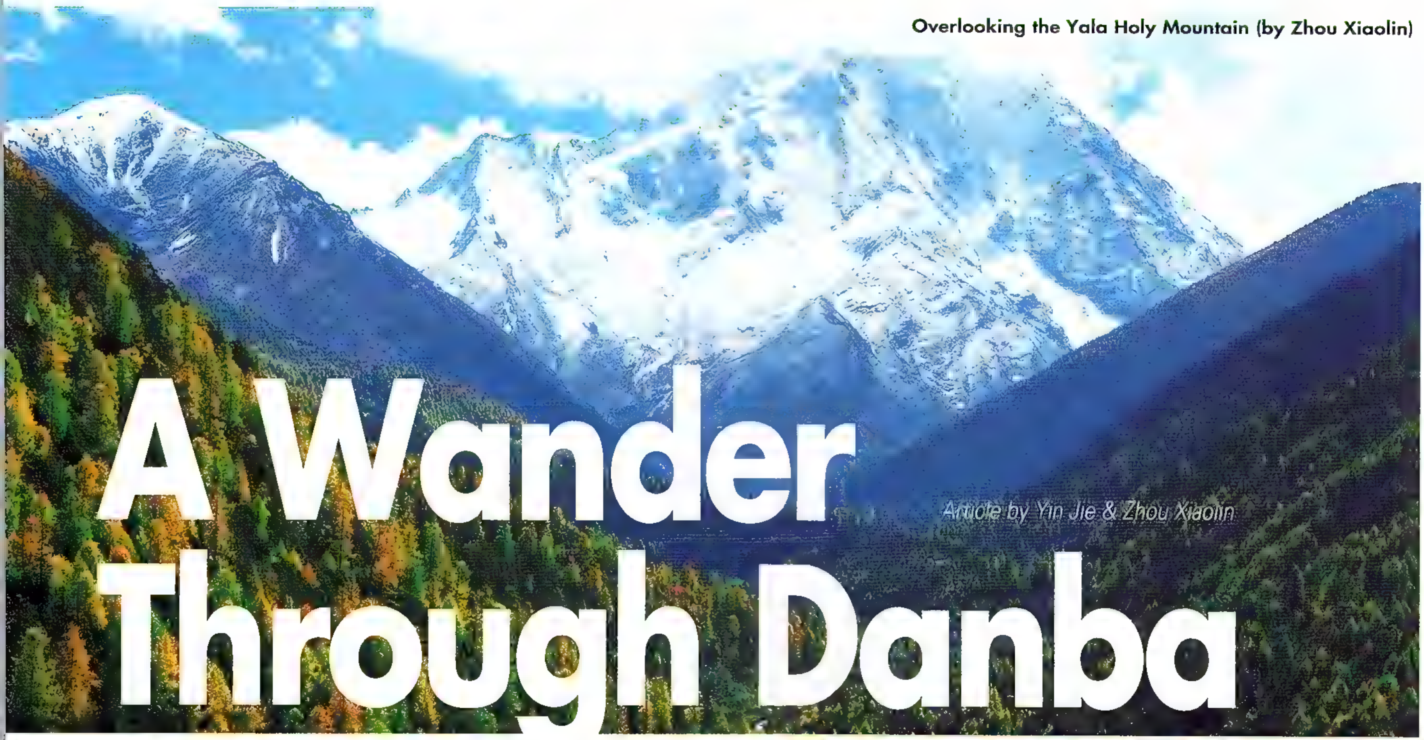


Overlooking the Yala Holy Mountain (by Zhou Xiaolin)

A Wander Through Danba

Article by Yin Jie & Zhou Xiaolin

Danba County lies in the eastern part of Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province and is 348 km from the provincial capital city of Chengdu. The county boasts the most ancient rock towers in China, in addition to many fascinating Tibetan villages. Sauntering through the villages and enjoying Tibetan hospitality is an indispensable treat for every travel photographer to this remote place.

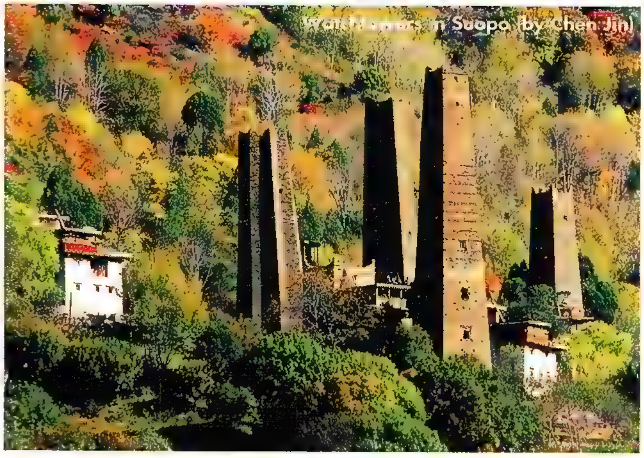
Tibetan Villages Not to Be Missed

The architectural style and layout of the many villages in Danba look similar, however they each feature their own distinctive characteristics, and the customs of different villages also vary though the people are all very hospitable. The following are several villages with easy access. Certainly, there are many more beautiful places than the ones we present here, so if you have time, you may visit them one by one and you'll find the trip extremely rewarding.

Jiaju—A Village in the Picture

Jiaju, which means "a hundred households" in the Tibetan language, is the most eye-catching village. Just several years ago, it was still unknown to the world, but now it receives the most tourists in Danba.

The houses in Jiaju are built with the same external appearance, and yet they don't feel dull. Painted red, black, yellow or white, they stand individually like colourful villas or old castles, while as a whole, they make up a grand complex. The charming scenery and kindness of the locals persuaded me to place Jiaju at the top of my recommendation list, but the easy access to the village is also a huge point in its favour. A 5-km-long asphalt road, built in August 2003, makes the journey to the mountain destination easier and spares DIY hikers from the heavy dust that bothers them elsewhere.



Watchtowers in Suopo (by Chen Jin)

Tranquil Fields in Zhonglu

Zhonglu Township has a history of more than 5,000 years, as testified to by the archaeological ruins of the New Stone Age and stone coffins dating back to the Warring States Period (475—221 B.C.). In the Tibetan language, "Zhonglu" means "a place cherished by both humans and divines". Legends have it that the ancestors of the Zhonglu people prayed for a divine direction before emigrating from Tibet. A lama priest bearing the divine decree gave them a sheep and said, "Take it and settle down where it dies." When the people got to this place, the sheep died, so they settled down and named the new habitat "Zhonglu".

Besides rich historical records, Zhonglu also pleases tourists with the sight of pastoral fields set against the sacred mountain of Mo'erduo in the distance. Here, you can see the best example of watchtowers and residential dwellings standing together. The 21 remaining watchtowers of various sizes and styles either stand amidst residential dwellings or lonely in the fields. The dwellings are different from those in other Danba villages, as the flat terrain allowed them to be built larger.

One more noteworthy point about Zhonglu is that the village's young male residents are known for their fine looks, making it a source of performers for major Tibetan song and dance troupes.

Suopo—Home of Ancient Watchtowers

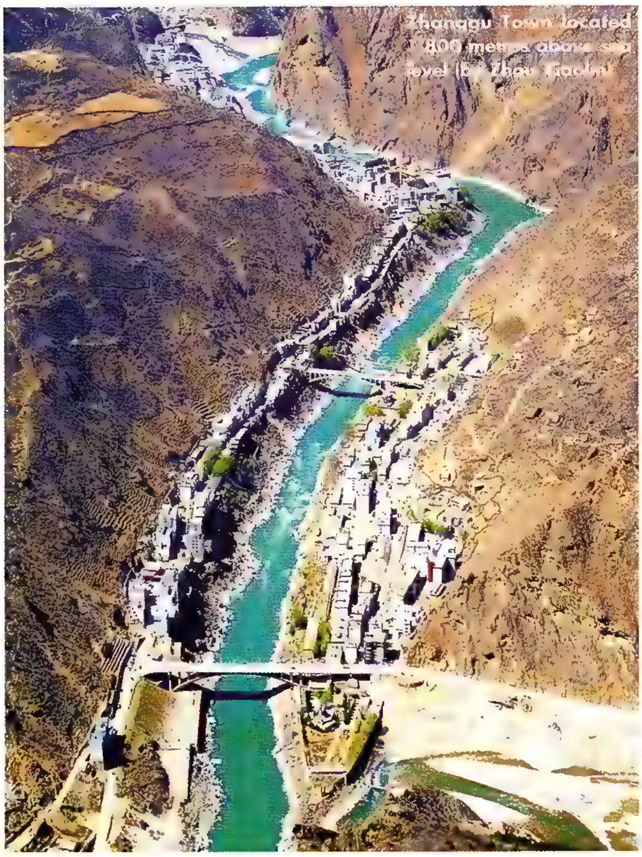
If you are confident of your fitness level, you can climb higher and explore deeper into the mountains of Zhonglu where the scenery is much better. When you get to the crack between the mountains, you're quite near Suopo, right on the other side. "Suopo" is the Tibetan term to address the Mongols who used to lay pasture here. 116 watchtowers are to be found here in Suopo, the most in Danba and the world, making viewing the watchtowers a must-do activity for every tourist.

Suopo lies by the Dadu River five kilometres southeast of Danba County proper. The buildings look spectacular viewed from the road. When dusk falls, they all glow in the setting sun. Time is very important for a marvelous shot: 7:00 ~ 7:30 p.m. in summer and 4:00 ~ 4:30 p.m. in winter are the best times to catch the sunlight. Most tourists may feel contented with a look at the stirring sight across the river, while lovers will prefer to walk over the chain bridge to touch the old structures with their own hands. Several of the rock towers are now open to visitors who want to experience the life of ancient people.

Balang—Simple Yet Delicate

Balang is my favourite village and I have taken many walks around the area. The village is very small with only 30-odd households, and yet the scenery changes with each step. Most of the houses lie next to each other, or are linked together by one-metre-tall rock walls with winding paths in between. Only the cement pavement causes a little disharmony with the simple atmosphere giving one the feeling that a cobbled pavement would make a better match for sure. The dwellings here are different from those in Jiaju, but are equally beautiful. As they remain simple and primitive, without the modern trimmings found in the richer Jiaju, they win far more praise from tourists.

The pigs in Balang may be the happiest on earth as they enjoy extensive feeding grounds. It's not uncommon to bump into Mr. or Miss Pig in the village or run into glutted piggies sleeping under the sun. A happy scene indeed; its' not hard to feel envious of their pleasure.


Zhanggu Town located 1,800 metres above sea level (by Zhou Taolin)

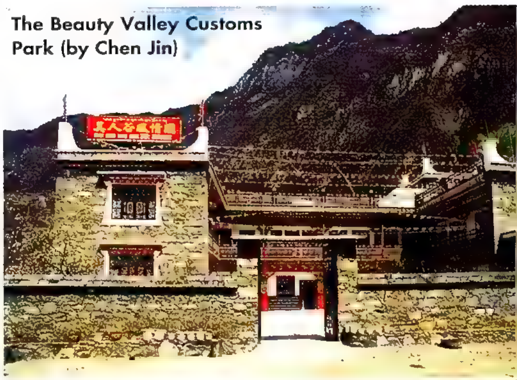
Must-see Natural Scenic Areas

Dangling Scenic Area

Dangling Scenic Area lies in Bian'er Township. The direct distance between Lianghekou (2,780 metres) in the east and the snow-capped main peak (5,470 metres) is merely 21.5 km, but the altitude difference is as much as 2,690 metres. The sharp vertical gap results in a grand sight of numerous deep gullies and precipitous cliffs.

There are two hot springs 4 km south of Dangling Village: One is Mu Ri Cha Qu, meaning "powder" in the Tibetan language for its strong sulfur smell, and the other is Bu Ka Cha Qu, meaning "meadow bathing pool" for the surrounding large meadow. Both springs operate all year round and the minerals contained in the water are said to have miraculous effects in treating neuralgia, stomach and intestine troubles, diabetes and arthritis. Surrounding the ponds are dense primitive forests. The pleasant scenery and a warm bath will be sure to wash away your fatigue.

The Tian Tang Gu (Paradise Valley), in Dangling Scenic Area, lies between Dangling Village and Lianghekou in Bian'er Township and the Yidao Bridge in Dandong Township. When October comes, the first frost will fall on the peaks and ridges in the Paradise Valley, and bring the forests under the snow line a gorgeous autumnal cover.


The Beauty Valley Customs Park (by Chen Jin)

Mo'erduo Holy Mountain

Mount Mo'erduo is named after the general who led the Tibetan people against the invaders. It is the sacred mountain of the Black Religion, the oldest religion of the Tibetan people. One of the four sacred mountains in the Tibetan-inhabited areas, the 4,820-metre-high Mo'erduo is also known for its 108 wonderful sights. Standing on the mountain summit, you can see the Golden Summit of Mt. Emei in the east and the Gangdise Mountains in the west. You will also overlook the 8 silvery rivers running beneath like white hada (the silk scarf of the Tibetan people) and the 56 towering peaks that symbolize China's 56 ethnic groups.

On the 10th day of every seventh lunar month (birthday of General Mo'erduo), pilgrims from all directions will gather at the Mo'erduo Temple to worship the general and circle the sacred mountain by foot. Zhonglu Township is the best place to watch this event and take fine photos of the mountain.

Donggu—A Natural Bonsai

The Donggu natural bonsai scenic spot lies in Donggu Township in the southwest and is 18 km from Zhanggu Town, seat of Danba County. There are many marvellous spots for the eyes to take in, such as the Doushuiyan waterfall on the Mao Liniu (Yak) River, the Reshuitang (Hot Water) Spring, the Donggu Red Crags Beach and the snow Yala Mountain, hence the name "natural miniature landscape".

From mid-October to mid-November, the mountains on the sides of the Yak River will be dotted with colourful flowers and frosted forests. The splashing waterfalls and the flaming leaves add radiance and beauty to each other, making the mountains and rivers in Danba more enchanting.

Dadu River Gorge

The precipitous Dadu River Gorge is 2,600 metres deep at its deepest part. The gorge extends some 108 km from the seat of Danba County in the north and

Guzan of Kangding in the south. Hidden beneath the rapids are huge rocks and dangerous shoals.

Greater Golden River (Dajinchuan)

Dajinchuan is the name of the upper reaches of the Dadu River. The river is called Dadu below the seat of Danba County where Dajinchuan meets Xiaojinchuan (Lesser Golden River). The Dajinchuan extends 34 km in Danba County. On the banks stand dwellings in serenity and tranquillity. The valley is full of flourishing pearl blossoms in March and red maples in golden autumn. To test your courage, you may ride a raft made of ox skin, which once carried the ancestors of the Chinese people across the rushing waters.

Ruins of New Stone Age culture at Zhonglu

The stone coffins and ancient ruins in Han'eyi Village were first discovered in the early 1980s. They were identified to be ruins from the New Stone Age, the Spring and Autumn Period (770—476B.C.) and the Warring States Period. In 1989 and 1990, eight ash pits and two house sites were excavated, in addition to a large number of stoneware, boneware, pottery utensils and decoration articles.

Moska Grassland

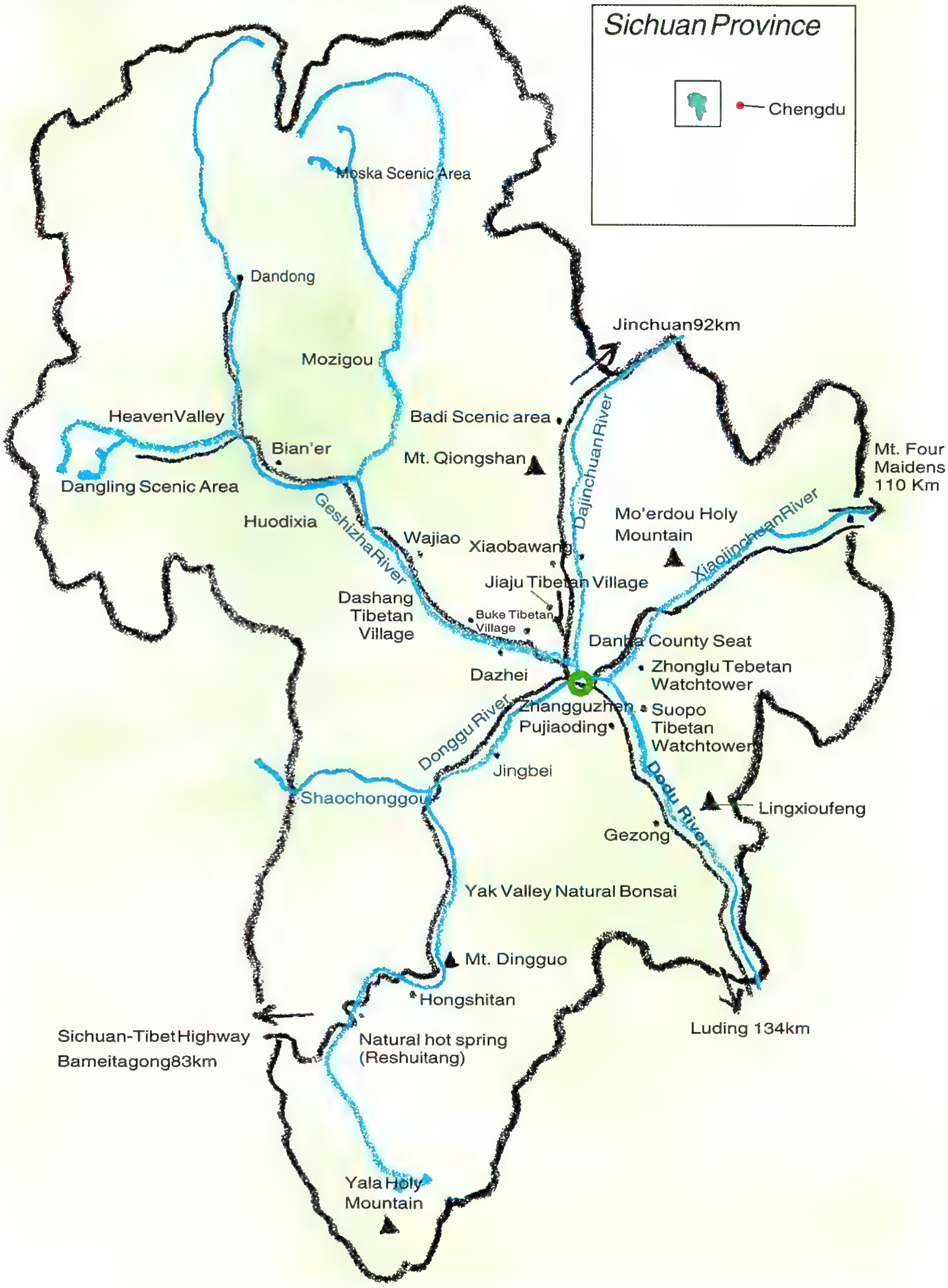
The grassland is in east Dandong Township. When summer comes, the flowers blooming on the grassland look like colourful petals scattered by a fairy lady to decorate the huge green carpet.

White-Robed Buddha and the Natural Mural

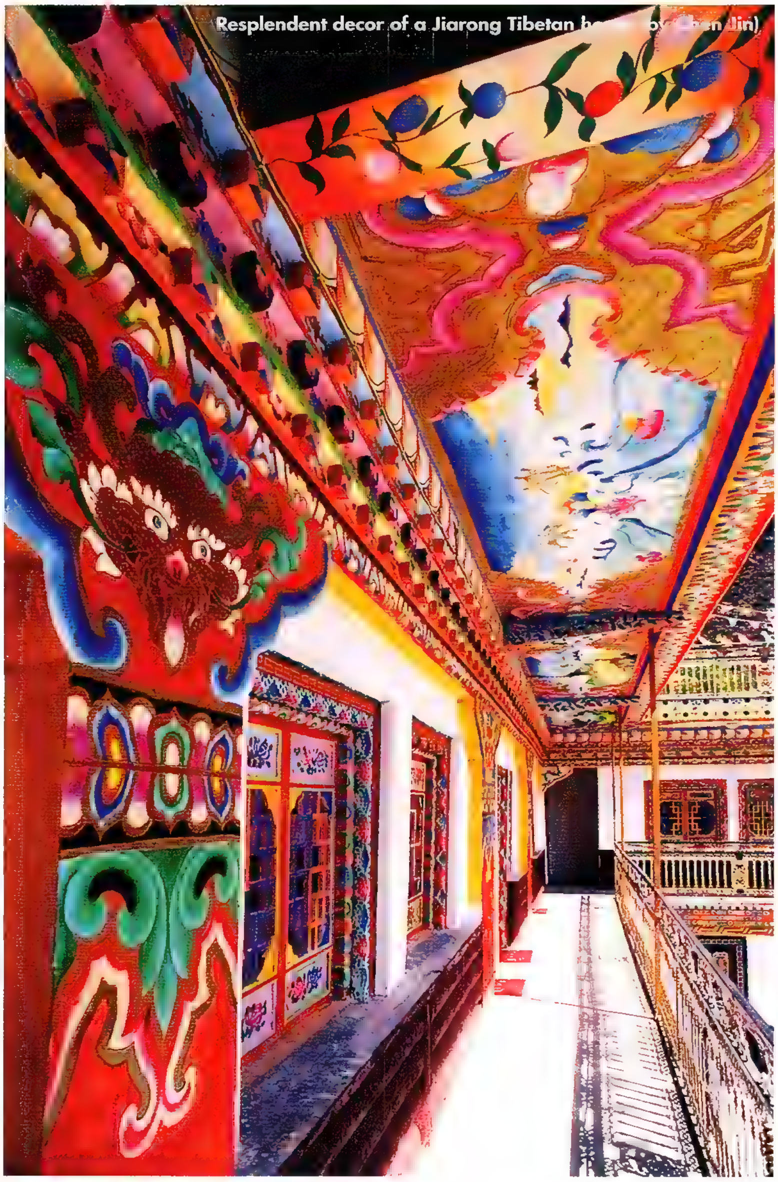
The rock formation known as the White-Robed Buddha stands by Xihe Bridge in Danba County proper. The rock formation lies at the top of Yongboshan Mountain, where the rivers of Donggu and Dajinchuan meet, 2,600 metres above sea level. On top of the mountain stands a white rock that looks like a divine spirit dressed in a white robe, hence the name "White-Robed Buddha". It's said that sometimes at noon when the sun shines brightly in the clear sky, a fierce wind suddenly rises carrying dust and stones, and dark clouds soon cover the sky. Within a second, a huge waterspout forms swiftly where the two rivers join and rises as high as the White-Robed Buddha, and then a downpour follows. But as suddenly as the storm appears, in just a few minutes, the sky clears up again and the sun shines brightly as usual. This is what the locals call the mysterious "White-Robed Buddha playing with water".

On the cliff on the north banks of Dajinchuan and Xiaojinchuan, there is a huge natural "mural" of quartz. Viewed from the Danba County seat, it's like an interesting picture printed on a standing screen.

Danba Tourist Map


Sichuan Province
Chengdu
Moska Scenic Area
Dandong
Mozigou
Jinchuan92km
HeavenValley
Bian'er
Badi Scenic area
Mt. Qiongshan
Mt. Four Maidens 110 Km
Dangling Scenic Area
Huodixia
Dajinchuan River
Geshizha River
Wajiao
Xiaobawang
Mo'erdou Holy Mountain
Xiaojinchuan River
Jiaju Tibetan Village
Dashang Tibetan Village
Buke Tibetan Village
Danba County Seat
Zhonglu Tebetan Watchtower
Dazhei
Zhangguzhen
Pujiaoding
Suopo Tibetan Watchtower
Donggu River
Jingbei
Shaochonggou
Dadu River
Lingxioufeng
Gezong
Yak Valley Natural Bonsai
Mt. Dingguo
Hongshitan
Sichuan-TibetHighway Bameitagong83km
Natural hot spring (Reshuitang)
Luding 134km
Yala Holy Mountain

Danba Travel Tips


Resplendent decor of a Jiarong Tibetan h[illegible] by Chen Jin)

Transportation

All tourists have to pass Chengdu, capital city of Sichuan Province, before taking other routes to Danba. There are three ways to go to Danba:

1. Chengdu—Wolong—Mt. Siguniang (Four Maidens)—Danba (348 km asphalt road)

On the way, tourists can drop by the Wolong Giant Panda Nature Reserve, Mt. Balang, Mt. Siguniang, etc. Scheduled buses are available at the Chengdu Ximen (West Gate) Terminus every morning.

2. Chengdu—Ya'an—Erlangshan Tunnel—Luding—Danba (435 km asphalt road)

On the way, tourists can drop by Ya'an (known as Rain City), Mt. Erlang, iron cablebridge in Luding, Dadu River Canyon, etc.

3. Chengdu—Wenchuan—Miyaluo—Zhegushan Tunnel—Markam—Jinchuan—Danba (528 km asphalt road)

On the way, tourists can drop by the Gu'ergou Hot Spring, Miyaluo, Zhuokeji Tibetan Village, Dajinchuan (Greater Golden Stream) Canyon, etc.

There are also mini-buses going back and forth between Danba county seat and every scenic spot.

Accommodation:

Yin Mao Guesthouse: One of the best guesthouses in Danba / Tel: (836) 352 2217 / Deluxe suite: RMB280, Standard room: RMB240 (washing room, hot water shower, electric blanket, NO air-con), Three-person room: RMB120

Mo'reduo Villa: Another good option. Delicate Sichuan dishes are served. Standard room: RMB200 (washing room, hot water shower)

Danba Hotel: A new hotel built beside a cable bridge. Very tidy and clean with water boiler, electric blanket, NO telephone. Youth hostel style. Tel: (836) 3521 075, or 139 9046 4600.

Gubao (Ancient Castle) Hotel: Located beside Dadu River, provides parking, tea house, restaurant. Tel: (836) 3522 999

Local produce & delicacies:

Traditional food include sour vegetable dumpling, sweet corn pastry, white flour pastry, roasted potato, wine, marinated meat, etc. Yummy fruits can be tasted around the year in Danba: cherry in April, apricot in late May, peach in mid-June, plum in late June, apple in July, walnut in August, pear in September, fig in October, and tangerine in November and December.

Besides, Danba also produces medicine herbs like caterpillar fungus, bulb of fritillary, tall gastrodia tuber, Rhodiola Crenulata, snowy tea, and Saussurea medusa. Qingke wine, butter tea, fruits, yak meat, white bean, wild fungus, and are also food for thought.

Other than food, tourists can hunt Tibetan headscarf, waist belt, and earthen pottery for souvenirs.

Costs (in RMB):

There are a rich list of festivals in Danba, namely Jiarong Tibetan New Year, Flower Appreciating Festival, Mo'erduo Temple Fair, Horse Race in May, Lantern Festival, and Jiarong Tibetan Customs Festival.

Most dancing shows require entrance fees. Usually, a show by 30 dancers costs 400 yuan for two hours, 10~20 dancers costs 200 yuan for an hour, and less than 10 dancers costs 100 yuan for 45 minutes.

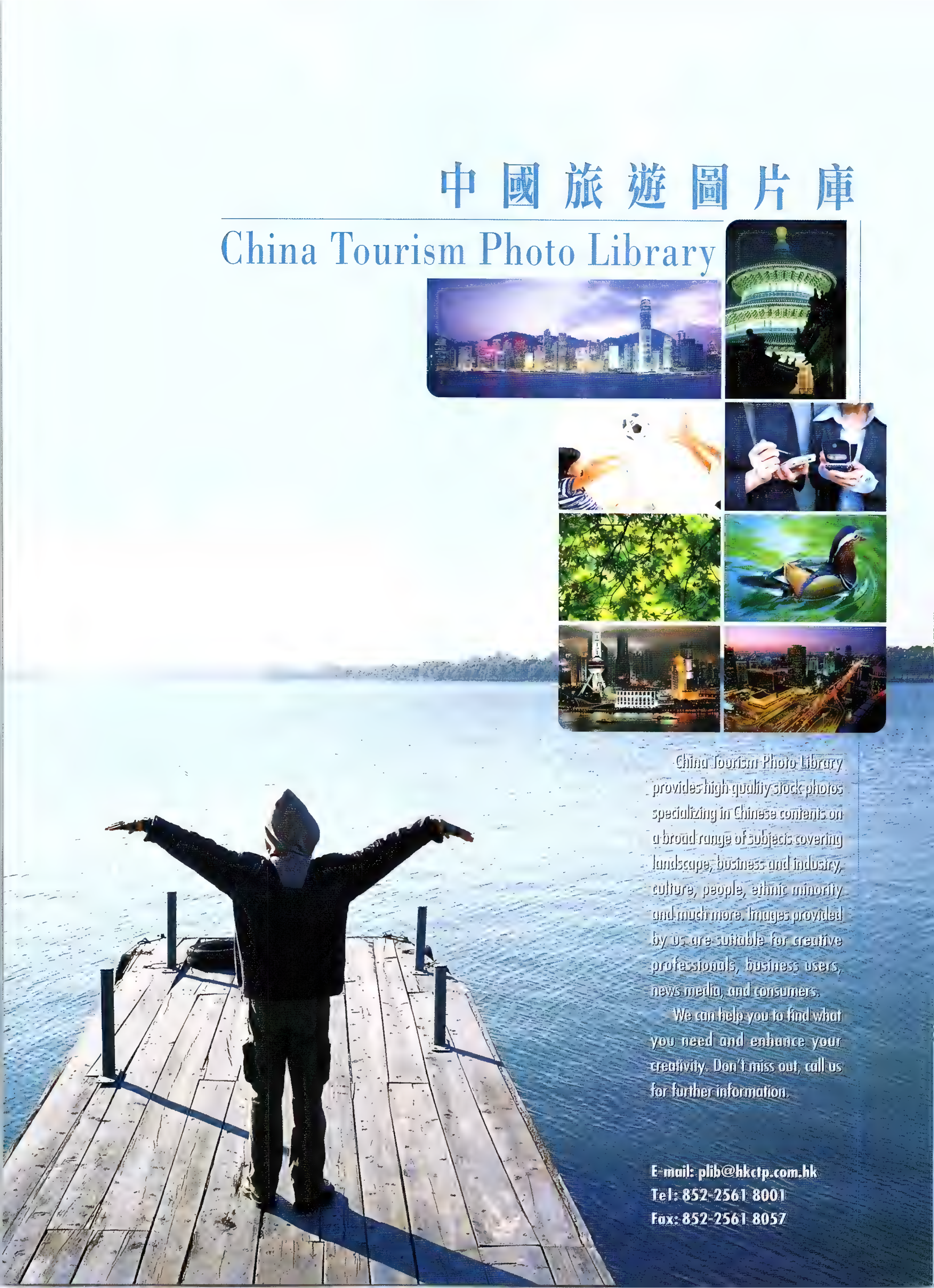
Photo-shooting in local residence ~ 2 yuan / person
Tibetan clothes rental ~ 5~10 yuan / person
Entrance to Jiaju watchtower ~ 30 yuan / person
Suopo watchtower ~ 15 yuan / person
Zhonglu watchtower ~ 20 yuan / person
Horse riding in Danba ~ 40 yuan / hour
Horse riding in Dangling ~ 85 yuan / day

Attention:

1. Danba has four distinct seasons, with an average temperature of 14°C. Most days have bright sunshine. However, there is a large temperature range between day and night. Do prepare enough warm clothing, especially rain or snow resistant ones.

2. Prepare complex Vitamins or other medicines that cure or soothe flu and altitude sickness. The 68-km distance from Danba to Dangling is mainly pebbles road, it may be difficult to walk or drive. From Dangling Village to Hulu Lake, tourists may have to track or ride horses on divergent mountain trails. One should be very careful.

3. Tourists should respect the regulations set by the local tourism management unit, as well as the religious belief and customs of minority groups. Besides, lighting fire, hunting, and collection of wild life or plants are forbidden in the nature reserve area. Also, do not litter in the well preserved Mother Nature.



中國旅遊圖片庫

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one fine day

All along, I think Zhuhai (Pearl Sea) in Guangdong Province is known for its leisure atmosphere and highly manicured parks. It must be one of the greenest developed cities in China. However, it was with mixed images that I arrived Zhuhai at Jiuzhou Port mid-afternoon in early August as one pal had told me, "There was nothing there, it was commercial," while another said, "It is very pleasant, very green."

The Overseas Chinese Hotel (on Yinbin-da-dao, Gongbei) was well situated downtown. My Cantonese was rusty and not only that I had been disappointed in previous China travels to find my rendition of the language was either not understood or the others were only into Putonghua. However, as the reception desk leading lady was not present I had to 'jump in' with my best and that kick-started my endeavours from then on and by a couple of days the linguistic wheels were running better.

On the first afternoon we—my wife and I—just walked the byways and found before us a smart modern city of wide tree-lined main streets, quite amazingly huge hotels-like the nearby Yinbo-and gaudily bedecked and alluring bars such as Hong Kong's Lang Kwai Fong, opposite the huge Yesterday lounge, just down the street from our hotel.

While the paths along the boulevards were moderately busy and anyway the width of those pedestrian-ways allowed easy strolling despite a multitude of other walkers plus vendors-peaches were in season, and longan-the market alleyways were crowded in the more traditional Asia style. The more popular restaurants had tables laid with cloths and early diners were gathered around bubbling hot-pots. Young waiters busily made between tables and callers called us in, to no avail at that moment.

On the first full day in Zhuhai we just wanted to stroll around the city and did so. Finding the shopping streets, enjoying tree canopied walks, just strolling with the population as it was Saturday. We walked along Lover's Road just to spy across and down to Macau over the Gongbei Port buildings. The territory also includes 146 islands on this west side of the Pearl River delta. The best beaches lay at the southern end of Jida District by the Zhuhai Holiday Resort, west of Jiuzhou harbour.

Two nautical miles east into the sea are the nine Jiuzhou Islands—from whence the port we used got its name. The main island, which covers but a fifth of a square kilometre, features "wonder stones" shaped by erosion like people and animals, also plants peculiar to the island and a sandy beach. Dong'ao Island, close to the west side of the river, offers a site to watch the sunrise and set from the same spot.

A Fisher Girl statue is the Statue of Liberty equivalent landmark of Zhuhai, located on the scenic Xianglu Bay, the girl holding a pearl high in the air with both hands, in a

宗盱眙十三香王氏手抓
好虾、好料、好味道、新鲜上
13727095758

on the pearl

Photos & article by Tony Henderson

feminine pose. The pearl's bright luster is said to reflect the brightness of Zhuhai's airs as the place resembles a bright pearl on the shore of the South China Sea.

Legend has it that a beautiful fairy maiden fell in love with a young fisherman. He heard a rumours that cast doubt on the veracity of her love and he asked the girl to prove that love and give him the bracelet she wore. Although she knew she would die if the bracelet were removed, she took it off and presented it to him, showing her true love. The girl died. The fisherman was full of remorse, beside himself with grief.

An immortal, Jiuzhou Elder, was moved by their love and helped the young man resuscitate the girl. The couple offered a large precious pearl to their transcendental benefactor during their marriage ceremony. Thus the appearance of this special lady with the pearl of love.

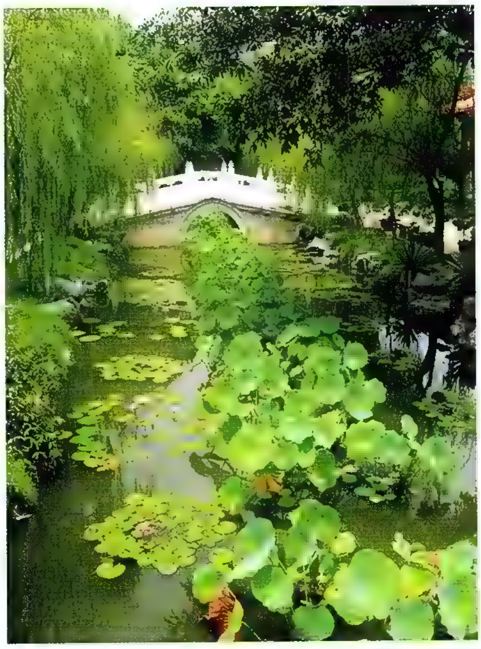
On more mundane matters we had noted an atmospheric restaurant in the Gaoshacun market area the evening before and when the hunger pangs got the best of us, returned to locate that most interesting spread of tables under its wide canopy—the Je Li So Ba (or so it sounded) restaurant. A cold freshly brewed Hai Zhu beer was the first order on the list, as a quencher. It came with side dishes of peanuts and pickles.

Though there was some confusion with the order the result could not have been better. A black chicken broth, a plate of water spinach and fried rice, then a fat bellied yellow-tail fish. The chap serving the chicken broth had his countenance featured on the wall besides a selection of dishes he had won awards for serving up, so we insisted on a photo together.

The parties of locals around us at their tables were happily rowdy and included the serving girls in their beer drinking rounds to a lot of laughs. Street musician came to tables to offer their ballads. The flux of people passing in the street were of unending interest for us. There was never a dull moment at that restaurant.

To walk off our mini feast we took another stroll and somehow located the Lotus Street area—about the only one other than the coastal Lover's Road to have an English name. Shopping was the main attraction for the crowds though a series of canopied stalls serving fruits cocktails and other more serious drinks was replete with custom and people watchers and lots of pretty girls in fashionable gear.

Back at the room it was tales from the old days in the Middle Kingdom on the television, beers and snacks till lights out.... The end of a long day of walking around the streets getting to know the place, pausing for refreshments, and though we were tired, we both agreed that we'd had a fine first day in a very modern China city.



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Focus on Yunnan

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-La, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.

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Focus on Fujian

Situated on the southeast coast, Fujian Province overlooks Taiwan Island across the Taiwan Strait. Its mountainous landscape includes the Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area, one of the UN World Heritage sites in China. The province's zigzag coastlines, numerous beaches and charming seas offer spectacular scenic beauty as well as historical and cultural interest in such places as the Drumming Wave Islet in Xiamen and the Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island.

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Focus on Shanghai

Shanghai, the largest metropolis in China, and formerly the Far East financial centre, has experienced dramatic development over the past century. The world-famous Bund along the Huangpu River shows you buildings of different historical periods and varied architectural styles, while skyscrapers are rising in the new area of Pudong. Shanghai's multiculturism is seen in its music — operas, nostalgic jazz and discos — and in the busy commercial district of Nanjing and Huaihai roads.

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Focus on Shaanxi

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.

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Focus on Guangdong

An important gateway into China, the fertile Pearl River Delta of the southern province of Guangdong fans out from Guangzhou to the South China Sea and borders Hong Kong and Macao. The province's natural scenic spots include the limestone pinnacles of Zhaoqing's Seven Star Crags, the red sandstone of Danxia Mountain, and the volcanic beauty of Xiqiao Mountain. The capital, Guangzhou, offers plenty of history in its museums, temples, mosques and old colonial buildings.

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Focus on Guizhou

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.

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Focus on Tianjin

Tianjin, one of the four municipalities under direct Central Government administration, is an important industrial and commercial centre of China and the biggest port in the north. The history of the city can be found in its Ancient Culture Street, 100-year-old Western-style buildings, Opera Museum and Mazu Temple. Besides the TV Tower and the Haihe River in the city, there are scenic spots in the outskirts, including the Dule Temple and the Great Wall at Huangya Pass.

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Focus on Xinjiang

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, which provide tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem imbedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak — the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique colourful culture.

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Focus on Beijing

Beijing is a metropolis of everlasting charm. There are simply too many captivating things to see, to experience and to taste in this grand city with both old glamour and new mobility. There are historical sites such as the Palace Museum (the Forbidden City), the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, and the Ming Tombs; there are also many scenic spots in its outskirts. Recently, tours have been organised for visitors to taste the real Beijing flavour of life — touring the small back lanes, having tea in a traditional-style teahouse and enjoying the Peking Opera.

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Focus on Shanxi

Shanxi Province, one of the birthplaces of the Chinese civilisation, has impressive ancient architecture and a wealth of well-preserved Buddhist temples, monasteries and grottoes. Among the most famous are the Yungang Grottoes containing some of China's oldest sculptures and Buddhist art, the Yongle Palace, the Jinci Temple, the Hanging Monastery built on a sheer cliff and the Wutai Mountain, one of China's most famous sacred Buddhist lands.

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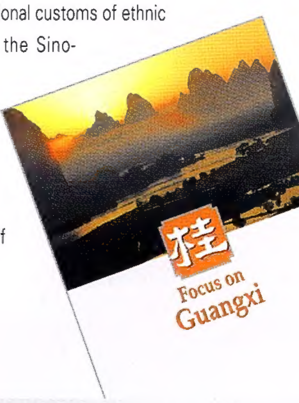
Focus on Guangxi

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the varied traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.



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Highlights of Issue No. 301

The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal

New Face, Fresh Look

The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal was firstly constructed in the Spring and Autumn Period (770 — 476 B.C.) and re-built by Emperor Yangdi (605 — 618) of Sui Dynasty.

China's major rivers, such as the Yellow River and Yangtze River, all flow from west to east into the ocean. There was long felt a need for a waterway to facilitate transport from north to south and vice versa. The 1,794 km long Grand Canal built by Emperor Yangdi connects Beijing and Hangzhou, running through Tianjin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang.

The Grand Canal is not only a north-south communication waterway, but also connects minor rivers such as the Haihe River, Huaihe River, and Qiantangjiang River.

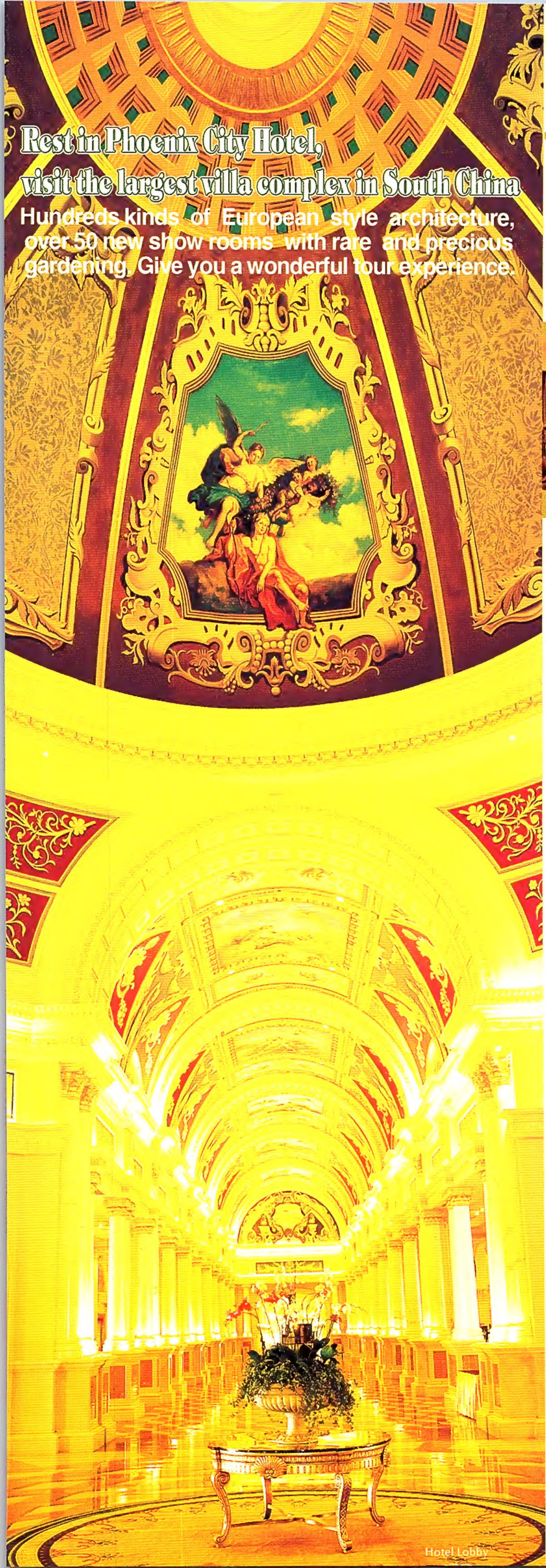
Nowadays, drought is a major climatic problem in North China, and therefore, a water conservancy project costing an investment of RMB500 billion is taking place. Along the ancient Grand Canal, water is to drawn from south to north. Our journalist travels along the Grand Canal, and shows how this ancient canal works again in 21st century.

Discover Sea Turtle

Haigui Bay, literally means "sea turtle bay", is a 800-metre long bay in Huidong County, Guangdong Province, and the only place in China that sea turtle can breed freely. Within three years, the author gets into the bay for over ten times, and has witnessed some touching scenes of the animal.

Lamasery in Qinghai

Qinghai is not a strange place to traveller. It is where the Qinghai-Tibet Road starts, the home of the blue Qinghai Lake, and the source of the Yellow River and Yangtze River. Yet, very few attentions have been paid to lamasery in Qinghai, and its unique architecture and religious activities are long ignored. Follow our journalist, let your imagination fly in the mysterious lamaseries.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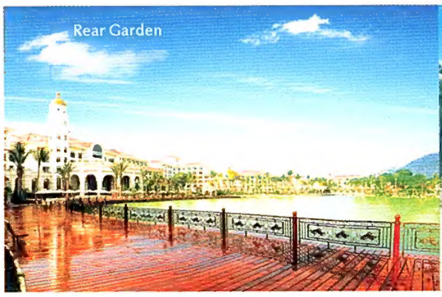
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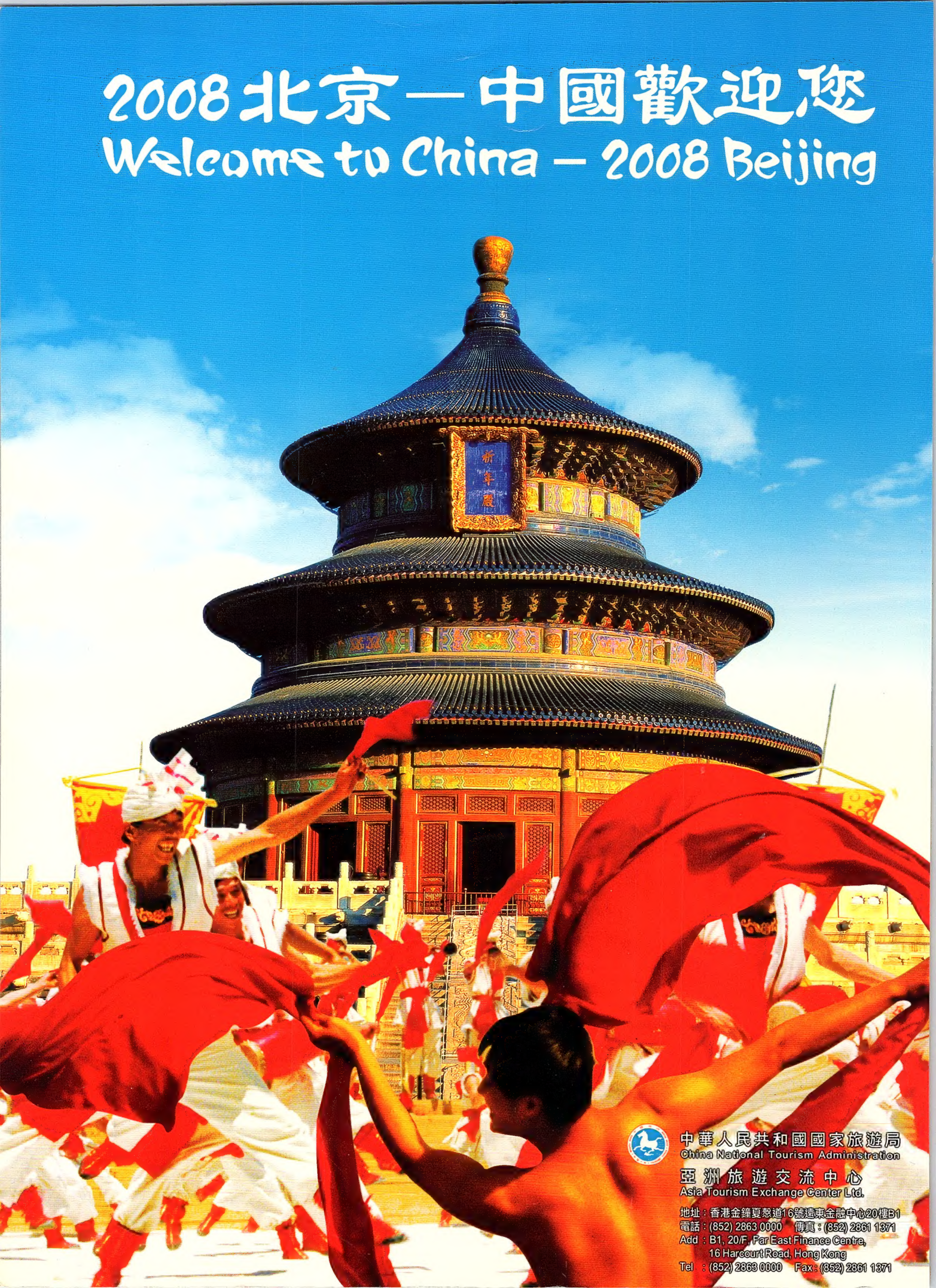
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